IMPRESSIONS AND EXPERIENCES



W. D. HOWELLS

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IMPRESSIONS AND EXPERIENCES

BY

W. D. HOWELLS

AUTHOR OF "A HAZARD OF NEW FORTUNES"
"THE QUALITY OF MERCY" ETC.



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1896

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE COUNTRY PRINTER	1
POLICE REPORT	45
I TALK OF DREAMS	95
AN EAST-SIDE RAMBLE	127
TRIBULATIONS OF A CHEERFUL GIVER	150
THE CLOSING OF THE HOTEL	189
GLIMPSES OF CENTRAL PARK	224
NEW YORK STREETS	245

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IMPRESSIONS AND EXPERIENCES.

THE COUNTRY PRINTER.

My earliest memories, or those which I can make sure are not the sort of early hearsay that we mistake for remembrance later in life, concern a country newspaper, or, rather, a country printing-office. The office was in my childish consciousness some years before the paper was; the compositors rhythmically swaying before their cases of type; the pressman flinging himself back on the bar that made the impression, with a swirl of his long hair; the apprentice rolling the forms, and the foreman bending over the imposing-stone, were familiar to me when I could not grasp the notion of any effect from their labors. In due time I came to know all about it, and to understand that these activities went to the making of the Whig newspaper which my father edited to the confusion of the Locofocos, and in the especial interest of Henry Clay; I myself supported this leader so vigorously for the

Presidency in my seventh year that it was long before I could realize that the election of 1844 had resulted in his defeat. My father had already been a printer for a good many years, and some time in the early thirties he had led a literary forlorn hope, in a West Virginian town, with a monthly magazine, which he printed himself and edited with the help of his sister.

As long as he remained in business he remained a country editor and a country printer; he began to study medicine when he was a young man, but he abandoned it for the calling of his life without regret, and though with his speculative and inventive temperament he was tempted to experiment in other things, I do not think he would ever have lastingly forsaken his newspaper for them. In fact, the art of printing was in our blood; it never brought us great honor or profit; and we were always planning and dreaming to get out of it, or get it out of us; but we are all in some sort bound up with it still. To me it is now so endeared by the associations of childhood that I cannot breathe the familiar odor of types and presses without emotion; and I should not be surprised if I found myself trying to cast a halo of romance about the old-fashioned country office in what I shall have to say of it here.

I.

Our first newspaper was published in southwestern Ohio, but after a series of varying fortunes, which I need not dwell upon, we found ourselves in possession of an office in the northeastern corner of the State, where the prevalent political feeling promised a prosperity to one of my father's anti-slavery opinions which he had never yet enjoyed. He had no money, but in those days it was an easy matter to get an interest in a country paper on credit, and we all went gladly to work to help him pay for the share that he acquired in one by this means. An office which gave a fair enough living, as living was then, could be bought for twelve or fifteen hundred dollars; but this was an uncommonly good office, and I suppose the half of it which my father took was worth one sum or the other. Afterward, within a few months, when it was arranged to remove the paper from the village where it had always been published to the county-seat, a sort of joint-stock company was formed, and the value of his moiety increased so much, nominally at least, that he was nearly ten years paying for it. By this time I was long out of the story, but at the beginning I was very vividly in it, and before the world began to call me with that voice which the heart of

youth cannot resist, it was very interesting; I felt its charm then, and now, as I turn back to it, I feel its charm again, though it was always a story of steady work, if not hard work.

The county-seat, where it had been judged best to transfer the paper lest some other paper of like polities should be established there, was a village of only six or seven hundred inhabitants. But, as the United States Senator who was one of its citizens used to say, it was "a place of great political privileges." The dauntless man who represented the district in the House for twenty years, and who had fought the anti-slavery battle from the first, was his fellow-villager, and more than compeer in distinction; and besides these, there was nearly always a State Senator or Representative among us. The county officers, of course, lived at the county-seat, and the leading lawyers, who were the leading politicians, made their homes in the shadow of the court house, where one of them was presently elected to preside as Judge of the Common Pleas. In polities, the county was already overwhelmingly Freesoil, as the forerunner of the Republican party was then called; the Whigs had hardly gathered themselves together since the defeat of General Scott for the Presidency; the Democrats, though

dominant in state and nation, and faithful to slavery at every election, did not greatly outnumber among us the zealots called Comeouters, who would not vote at all under a constitution recognizing the right of men to own men. Our paper was Freesoil, and its field was large among that vast majority of the people who believed that slavery would finally perish if kept out of the territories, and confined to the old Slave States. With the removal of the press to the county-seat there was a hope that this field could be widened, till every Freesoil voter became a subscriber. It did not fall out so; even of those who subscribed in the ardor of their political sympathies, many never paid; but our list was nevertheless handsomely increased, and numbered fifteen or sixteen hundred. I do not know how it may be now, but then most country papers had a list of four or five hundred subscribers; a few had a thousand, a very few twelve hundred, and these were fairly decimated by delinquents. We were so flown with hope that I remember there was serious talk of risking the loss of the delinquents on our list by exacting payment in advance; but the measure was thought too bold, and we compromised by demanding two dollars a year for the paper, and taking a dollar and a half if paid in advance. Twenty-five years later

my brother, who had followed my father in the business, discovered that a man who never meant to pay for his paper would as lief owe two dollars as any less sum, and he at last risked the loss of the delinquents by requiring advance payment; it was an heroic venture, but it was perhaps time to make it.

The people of the county were mostly farmers, and of these nearly all were dairymen. The few manufactures were on a small scale, except perhaps the making of oars, which were shipped all over the world from the heart of the primeval forests densely wooding the vast levels of the region. The portable steam sawmills dropped down on the borders of the woods have long since eaten their way through and through them, and devoured every stick of timber in most places, and drunk up the watercourses that the woods once kept full; but at that time half the land was in the shadow of those mighty poplars and hickories, elms and chestnuts, ashes and hemlocks; and the meadows that pastured the herds of red cattle were dotted with stumps as thick as harvest stubble. Now there are not even stumps; the woods are gone, and the watercourses are torrents in spring and beds of dry clay in summer. The meadows themselves have vanished, for it has been found that the strong yellow soil will produce

more in grain than in milk. There is more money in the hands of the farmers there, though there is still so little that by any city scale it would seem comically little, pathetically little; but forty years ago there was so much less that fifty dollars seldom passed through a farmer's hands in a year. Payment was made in kind rather than in coin, and every sort of farm produce was legal tender at the printing-office. Wood was welcome in any quantity, for the huge box-stove consumed it with inappeasable voraeity, and then did not heat the wide, low room which was at once editorial-room, composing-room, and press-room. Perhaps this was not so much the fault of the stove as of the building. In that cold lake-shore country the people dwelt in wooden structures almost as thin and flimsy as tents; and often in the first winter of our sojourn the type froze solid with the water which the compositor put on it when he wished to distribute his case; the inking rollers had to be thawed before they could be used on the press; and if the current of the editor's soul had not been the most genial that ever flowed in this rough world, it must have been congealed at its source. The cases of type had to be placed very near the windows so as to get all the light there was, and they got all the cold there was, too. From time to

time, the compositor's fingers became so stiff that blowing on them would not avail; he passed the time in excursions between his stand and the stove; in very cold weather, he practiced the device of warming his whole case of types by the fire, and when it lost heat, warming it again. The man at the press-wheel was then the enviable man; those who handled the chill damp sheets of paper were no more fortunate than the compositors.

II.

The first floor of our office-building was used by a sash-and-blind factory; there was a machine-shop somewhere in it, and a mill for sawing out shingles; and it was better fitted to the exercise of these robust industries than to the requirements of our more delicate craft. Later, we had a more comfortable place, in a new wooden "business block," and for several years before I left it the office was domiciled in an old dwelling-house, which we bought, and which we used without much change. It could never have been a very luxurious dwelling, and my associations with it are of a wintry cold, scarcely less polar than that we were inured to elsewhere. In fact, the climate of that region is rough and fierce; and the lake winds have a malice sharper than the saltest gales of the North

Shore of Massachusetts. I know that there were lovely summers and lovelier autumns in my time there, full of sunsets of a strange, wild, melancholy splendor, I suppose from some atmospherie influenee of the lake; but I think ehiefly of the winters, so awful to us after the mild seasons of southern Ohio; the frosts of ten and twenty below; the village streets and the eountry roads drowned in snow, the eonsumptives in the thin houses, and the "slippin'," as the sleighing was ealled, that lasted from Deeember to April with hardly a break. At first our family was housed on a farm a little way out, beeause there was no tenement to be had in the village, and my father and I used to walk to and from the offiee together in the morning and evening. I had taught myself to read Spanish, in my passion for Don Quixote, and I was then, at the age of fifteen, preparing to write a life of Cervantes. This seheme oeeupied me a good deal in those bleak walks, and perhaps it was beeause my head was so hot with it that my feet were always very eold; but my father assured me that they would get warm as soon as my boots froze. If I have never yet written that life of Cervantes, on the other hand I have never been quite able to make it elear to myself why my feet should have got warm when my boots froze.

III.

It may have been only a theory of his; it may have been a joke. He had a great many theories and a great many jokes, and together these always kept life interesting and sunshiny to him. With his serene temperament and his happy doubt of disaster in any form, he was singularly well fitted to encounter the hardships of a country editor's lot. But for the moment, and for what now seems a long time after the removal of our paper to the county-seat, these seem to have vanished. The printing-office was the centre of civic and social interest; it was frequented by visitors at all times, and on publication day it was a scene of gayety that looks a little incredible in the retrospect. The place was as bare and rude as a printing-office seems always to be: the walls were splotched with ink and the floor littered with refuse newspapers; but lured by the novelty of the affair, and perhaps attracted by a natural curiosity to see what manner of strange men the printers were, the school-girls and young ladies of the village flocked in, and made it like a scene of comic opera, with their pretty dresses and faces, their eager chatter, and lively energy in folding the papers and addressing them to the subscribers, while our fellow-citizens of the place, like the bassos

and barytones and tenors of the chorus, stood about and looked on with faintly sarcastic faces. It would not do to think now of what sorrow life and death have since wrought for all those happy young creatures, but I may recall without too much pathos the sensation when some citizen volunteer relaxed from his gravity far enough to relieve the regular mercenary at the crank of our huge power-press wheel, amid the applause of the whole company.

We were very vain of that press, which replaced the hand press hitherto employed in printing the paper. This was of the style and make of the hand-press which superseded the Ramage press of Franklin's time; but it had been decided to signalize our new departure by the purchase of a power-press of modern contrivance, and of a speed fitted to meet the demands of a subscription list which might be indefinitely extended. A deputation of the leading politicians accompanied the editor to New York, where he went to choose the machine, and where he bought a second-hand Adams press of the earliest pattern and patent. I do not know, or at this date I would not undertake to say, just what principle governed his selection of this superannuated veteran; it seems not to have been very cheap; but possibly he had a pre-

scienee of the disabilities whieh were to task his ingenuity to the very last days of that press. Certainly no man of less gift and skill eould have eoped with its infirmities, and I am sure that he thoroughly enjoyed nursing it into sueh aetivity as earried it hysterieally through those far-off publieation days. It had obseure funetional disorders of various kinds, so that it would from time to time eease to act, and would have to be doetored by the hour before it would go on. There was probably some organic trouble, too, for though it did not really fall to pieees on our hands, it showed itself incapable of profiting by several improvements whieh he invented, and could, no doubt, have sueeessfully applied to the press if its eonstitution had not been undermined. It went with a erank set in a prodigious fly-wheel which revolved at a great rate, till it eame to the moment of making the impression, when the whole meehanism was seized with sueh a reluetanee as nothing but an heroic effort at the erank eould overcome. It finally made so great a draught upon our forees that it was deeided to substitute steam for muscle in its operation, and we got a small engine, which eould fully sympathize with the press in having seen better days. I do not know that there was anything the matter with the engine itself, but the boiler had

some peculiarities which might well mystify the casual spectator. He could easily have satisfied himself that there was no danger of its blowing up, when he saw my brother feeding bran or corn-meal into its safety-valve, in order to fill up certain seams or fissures in it, which caused it to give out at the moments of the greatest reluctance in the press. But still, he must have had his misgivings of latent danger of some other kind, though nothing ever actually happened of a hurtful character. To this day, I do not know just where those seams or fissures were, but I think they were in the boiler-head, and that it was therefore suffering from a kind of chronic fracture of the skull. What is certain is that, somehow, the engine and the press did always get us through publication day, and not only with safety but often with credit; so that not long ago, when I was at home, and my brother and I were looking over an old file of his paper, we found it much better printed than either of us expected; as well printed, in fact, as if it had been done on an old hand-press, instead of the steam power-press which it vaunted the use of. The wonder was that, under all the disadvantages, the paper was ever printed on our steam power-press at all; it was little short of miraculous that it was legibly printed, and altogether

unaccountable that such impressions as we found in that file could come from it. Of course, they were not average impressions; they were the very best out of the whole edition, and were as creditable as the editorial make-up of the sheet.

IV.

On the first page was a poem, which I suppose I must have selected, and then a story, filling all the rest of the page, which my brother more probably chose; for he had a decided fancy in fiction, and had a scrap-book of inexhaustible riches, which he could draw upon indefinitely for old personal or family favorites. The next page was filled with selections of various kinds, and with original matter interesting to farmers. Then came a page of advertisements, and then the editorial page, where my father had given his opinions of the political questions which interested him, and which he thought it the duty of the country press to discuss, with sometimes essays in the field of religion and morals. There was a letter of two columns from Washington, contributed every week by the congressman who represented our district; and there was a letter from New York, written by a young lady of the county who was studying art under a mas-

ter of portraiture then flourishing in the metropolis; if that is not stating it too largely for the renown of Thomas Hicks, as we see it in a vanishing perspective. The rest of this page, as well as the greater part of the next, was filled with general news, clipped from the daily papers, and partly condensed from them. There was also such local intelligence as offered itself, and communications on the affairs of village and county; but the editor did not welcome tidings of new barns and abnormal vegetation, or flatter hens to lay eggs of unusual size or with unusual frequency by undue publie notice. All that order of minute neighborhood gossip which now makes the country paper a sort of open letter was then unknown. He published marriages and deaths, and such obituary notices as the sorrowing fondness of friends prompted them to send him; and he introdueed the eustom of publishing births, after the English fashion, whieh the people took to kindly.

We had an ambition, even so remotely as that day, in the direction of the illustration which has sinee so flourished in the newspapers. Till then we had never gone further in the art than to print a jubilant raceoon over the news of some Whig victory, or, what was to the same purpose, an inverted cockerel in mockery of

the beaten Democrats; but now we rose to the notion of illustrated journalism. We published a story with a woodcut in it, and we watched to see how that cut came out all through the edition with a pride that was perhaps too exhaustive; at any rate, we never tried another.

Of course, much of the political writing in the paper was controversial, and was carried on with editors of other opinions elsewhere in the county, for we had no rival in our own village. In this, which has always been the vice of American journalism, the country press was then fully as provincial as the great metropolitan journals are now. These may be more pitilessly personal in the conduct of their political discussions, and a little more skilled in obloquy and insult; but the bickering went on in the country papers quite as idly and foolishly. I fancy nobody really cared for our quarrels, and that those who followed them were disgusted when they were more than merely wearied.

The space given to them might better have been given even to original poetry. This was sometimes accepted, but was not invited; though our sixth page commonly began with verse of some kind. Then came more prose selections, but never at any time

accounts of murder or violent crimes, which the editor abominated in themselves and believed thoroughly corrupting. Advertisements of various kinds filled out the sheet, which was simple and quiet in typography, wholly without the hand-bill display which now renders nearly all newspapers repulsive to the eye. I am rather proud, in my quality of printer, that this was the style which I established; and we maintained it against all advertisers, who then as now wished to out-shriek one another in large type and ugly wood-cuts.

It was by no means easy to hold a firm hand with the "live business men" of our village and country, who came out twice a year with the spring and fall announcements of their fresh stocks of goods, which they had personally visited New York to lay in; but one of the moral advantages of an enterprise so modest as ours was that the counting-room and the editorial-room were united under the same head, and this head was the editor's. After all, I think we lost nothing by the bold stand we made in behalf of good taste, and at any rate we risked it when we had not the courage to cut off our delinquent subscribers.

We had business advertising from all the villages in the county, for the paper had a large circle of read-

ers in each, and a certain authority, in virtue of representing the county-seat. But a great deal of our advertising was of patent medicines, as the advertising still is in the country papers. It was very profitable, and so was the legal advertising, when we could get the money for it. The money had to come by order of court, and about half the time the order of court failed to include the costs of advertising. Then we did not get it, and we never got it, though we were always glad to get the legal advertising on the chance of getting the pay. It was not official, but was made up of the lawyers' notices to defendants of the suits brought against them. If it had all been paid for, I am not sure that we should now be in a position to complain of the ingratitude of the working-classes, or prepared to discuss, from a vantage of personal experience, the duty of vast wealth to the community; but still we should have been better off for that money, as well as the money we lost by a large and loyal list of delinquent subscribers. From time to time there were stirring appeals to these adherents in the editorial columns, which did not stir them, and again the most flattering offers to take any kind of produce in payment of subscription. Sometimes my brother boldly tracked the delinquents to their lairs. In most cases

I fancy they escaped whatever arts he used to take them; many died peacefully in their beds afterward, and their debts follow them to this day. Still, he must now and then have got money from them, and I am sure he did get different kinds of "trade." Once, I remember, he brought back in the tail of his wagon a young pig, a pig so very young that my father pronounced it "merely an organization." Whether it had been wrought to frenzy or not by the strange experiences of its journey, I cannot say, but as soon as it was set down on the ground it began to run madly, and it kept on running till it fell down and perished miserably. It had been taken for a year's subscription, and it was quite as if we had lost a delinquent subscriber.

V.

Upon the whole, our paper was an attempt at conscientious and self-respecting journalism; it addressed itself seriously to the minds of its readers; it sought to form their tastes and opinions. I do not know how much it influenced them, if it influenced them at all, and as to any effect beyond the circle of its subscribers, that cannot be imagined, even in a fond retrospect. But since no good effort is altogether lost, I

am sure that this endeavor must have had some taeit effeet; and I am sure that no one got harm from a sineerity of conviction that devoted itself to the highest interest of the reader, that appealed to nothing base, and flattered nothing foolish in him. It went from our home to the homes of the people in a very literal sense, for my father usually brought his exehanges from the offiee at the end of his day there, and made his seleetions or wrote his editorials while the household work went on around him, and his children gathered about the same lamp, with their books or their jokes; there were apt to be a good many of both.

Our county was the most eharaeteristie of that remarkable group of eounties in northern Ohio ealled the Western Reserve, and forty years ago the population was almost purely New England in origin, either by direet settlement from Conneeticut, or indirectly after the sojourn of a generation in New York State. We were ourselves from southern Ohio, where the life was then strongly tinged by the adjoining life of Kentucky and Virginia, and we found these transplanted Yankees cold and blunt in their manners; but we did not undervalue their virtues. They formed in that day a leaven of right thinking and feeling which was

to leaven the whole lump of the otherwise proslavery or indifferent state; and I suppose that outside of the antislavery eireles of Boston there was nowhere in the eountry a population so resolute and so intelligent in its politieal opinions. They were very radieal in every way, and hospitable to novelty of all kinds. I imagine that they tested more new religions and new patents than have been even heard of in less inquiring communities. When we eame among them they had lately been swept by the fires of spiritualism, whieh left behind a great deal of smoke and ashes where the inherited New England orthodoxy had been. A belief in the saving effieaey of spirit phenomena still exists among them, but not, I faney, at all in the former measure, when nearly every household had its medium, and the tables that tipped outnumbered the tables that did not tip. The old New York Tribune, whieh was eireulated in the eountry almost as widely as our own paper, had deeply sehooled the people in the eeonomies of Horaee Greeley, and they were ready for any sort of millenium, religious or industrial, that should arrive, while they looked very wisely after the main ehanee in the meantime. They were temperate, hard-working, hard-thinking folks, who dwelt on their seattered farms, and eame up to the County Fair onee

a year, when they were apt to visit the printing-office and pay for their papers. In spite of the English superstition to the contrary, the average American is not very curious, if one may judge from his reticence in the presence of things strange enough to excite question; and if our craft surprised these witnesses they rarely confessed it.

They thought it droll, as people of the simpler occupations are apt to think all the more complex arts; and one of them once went so far in expression of his humorous conception as to say, after a long stare at one of the compositors dodging and pecking at the type in his case, "Like an old hen pickin' up millet." This sort of silence, and this sort of comment, both exasperated the printers, who took their revenge as they could. They fed it full, once, when a country subscriber's horse, tied before the office, crossed his hind-legs and sat down in his harness like a tired man, and they proposed to go out and offer him a chair, to take him a glass of water, and ask him to come inside. But fate did not often give them such innings; they mostly had to create their chances of reprisal, but they did not mind that.

There was always a good deal of talk going on, but although we were very ardent politicians, the talk was

not political. When it was not mere banter, it was mostly literary; we disputed about authors among ourselves, and with the village wits who dropped in. There were several of these who were readers, and they liked to stand with their backs to our stove and challenge opinion concerning Holmes and Poe, Irving and Macaulay, Pope and Byron, Dickens and Shakespeare.

It was Shakespeare who was oftenest on our tongues; indeed, the printing-office of former days had so much affinity with the theatre that compositors and comedians were easily convertible; and I have seen our printers engaged in hand-to-hand combats with column-rules, two up and two down, quite like the real bouts on the stage. Religion entered a good deal into our discussions, which my father, the most tolerant of men, would not suffer to become irreverent, even on the lips of law students bathing themselves in the fiery spirit of Tom Paine. He was willing to meet any one in debate of moral, religious, or political questions, and the wildest-haired Comeouter, the most ruthless sceptic, the most credulous spiritualist, found him ready to take them seriously, even when it was hard not to take them in joke.

It was part of his duty, as publisher of the paper,

to bear patiently with another kind of frequenter: the type of farmer who thought he wished to discontinue his paper, and really wished to be talked into continuing it. I think he rather enjoyed letting the subscriber talk himself out, and carrying him from point to point in his argument, always consenting that he knew best what he wanted to do, but skilfully persuading him at last that a home-paper was more suited to his needs than any city substitute. Once I could have given the heads of his reasoning, but they are gone from me now. The editor was especially interested in the farming of the region, and I think it was partly owing to the attention he called to the question that its character was so largely changed. It is still a dairy country, but now it exports grain, and formerly the farmers had to buy their flour.

He did not neglect any real local interest in his purpose of keeping his readers alive to matters of more general importance, but he was fortunate in addressing himself to people who cared for the larger, if remoter, themes he loved. In fact, as long as slavery remained a question in our politics, they had a seriousness and dignity which the present generation can hardly imagine; and men of all callings felt themselves uplifted by the appeal this question made to their rea-

son and conscience. My father constantly taught in his paper that if slavery could be kept out of the territories it would perish, and, as I have said, this was the belief of the vast majority of his readers. They were more or less fervid in it, according to their personal temperaments; some of them were fierce in their convictions, and some humorous, but they were all in earnest. The editor sympathized more with those who took the true faith gayly. All were agreed that the Fugitive Slave Law was to be violated at any risk; it would not have been possible to take an escaping slave out of that county without bloodshed, but the people would have enjoyed outwitting his captors more than destroying them. Even in the great John Brown times, when it was known that there was a deposit of his impracticable pikes somewhere in our woods, and he and his followers came and went among us on some mysterious business of insurrectionary aim, the affair had its droll aspects which none appreciated more keenly than the Quaker-born editor. With his cheerful scepticism, he could never have believed that any harm or danger would come of it all; and I think he would have been hardly surprised to wake up any morning and find that slavery had died suddenly during the night, of its own iniquity.

He was like all country editors then, and I dare say now, in being a printer as well as an editor, and he took a full share in the mechanical labors. These were formerly much more burdensome, for twice or thrice the present type-setting was then done in the country offices. At the present day the country printer buys of a city agency his paper already printed on one side, and he gets it for the cost of the blank paper, the agency finding its account in the advertisements it puts in. Besides this patent inside, as it is called, the printer buys stereotyped selections of other agencies, which offer him almost as wide a range of matter as the exchange newspapers he used to choose from. The few columns left for local gossip and general news, and for whatever editorial comment he cares to make on passing events, can be easily filled up by two compositors. But in my time we had three journeymen at work and two or three girl-compositors, and commonly a boy-apprentice besides. The paper was richer in a personal quality, and the printing-office was unquestionably more of a school. After we began to take girl-apprentices it became coeducative, as far as they cared to profit by it; but I think it did not serve to widen their thoughts or quicken their wits as it did those of the men. They looked to their craft as a

living, not as a life, and they had no pride in it. They did not learn the whole trade, as the journeymen had done, and served only such apprenticeship as fitted them to set type. They were then paid by the thousand ems, and their earnings were usually as great at the end of a month as at the end of a year. But the boy who came up from his father's farm, with the wish to be a printer because Franklin had been one, and with the intent of making the office his university, began by sweeping it out, by hewing wood and carrying water for it. He became a roller-boy, and served long behind the press before he was promoted to the case, where he learned slowly and painfully to set type. His wage was forty dollars a year and two suits of clothes, for three years, when his apprenticeship ended, and his wander-years (too often literally) began. He was glad of being inky and stained with the marks of his trade; he wore a four-cornered paper cap, in the earlier stages of his service, and even an apron. When he became a journeyman, he clothed himself in black doeskin and broadcloth, and put on a silk hat and the thinnest-soled fine boots that could be found, and comported himself as much like a man of the world as he knew how to do. His work brought him acquainted with a vast variety of inter-

ests, and kept his mind as well as hands employed; he could not help thinking about them, and he did not fail to talk about them. His comments had generally a slightly acid flavor, and his constant survey of the world, in the "map of busy life" always under his eye, bred in him the contempt of familiarity. He was none the less agreeable for that, and the jokes that flew about from case to case in our office were something the editor would have been the last man to interfere with. He read or wrote on through them all, and now and then turned from his papers to join in them.

VI.

The journeyman of that time and place was much better than the printer whom we had known earlier and in a more lax civilization, who was too apt to be sober only when he had not the means to be otherwise, and who arrived out of the unknown with nothing in his pocket, and departed into it with only money enough to carry him to the next printing-office. If we had no work for him it was the custom to take up a collection in the office, and he accepted it as a usage of the craft, without loss of self-respect. It could happen that his often infirmity would overtake him before he got out of town, but in this case he did

not return for a second collection; I suppose that would not have been good form. Now and then a printer of this earlier sort appeared among us for a little time, but the air of the Western Reserve was somehow unfriendly to him, and he soon left us for the kindlier clime of the Ohio River, or for the more southerly region which we were ourselves sometimes so homesick for, and which his soft, rolling accent so pleasantly reminded us of. Still, there was something about the business—perhaps the arsenic in the type-metal—which everywhere affected the morals as it was said sometimes to affect the nerves.

There was one of our printers who was a capital compositor, a most engaging companion, and of unimpeachable Western Reserve lineage, who would work along in apparent perpetuity on the line of duty, and then suddenly deflect from it. If he wanted a day off, or several days, he would take the time, without notice, and with a princely indifference to any exigency we might be in. He came back when he chose, and offered to go to work again, and I do not remember that he was ever refused. He was never in drink; his behavior was the effect of some obscure principle of conduct, unless it was that moral contagion from the material he wrought in.

I do not know that he was any more characteristic, though, than another printer of ours, who was dear to my soul from the quaintness of his humor and his love of literature. I think he was, upon the whole, the most original spirit I have known, and it was not the least part of his originality that he was then aiming to become a professor in some college, and was diligently training himself for the calling in all the leisure he could get from his work. The usual thing would have been to read law and crowd forward in political life, but my friend despised this common ideal. We were both studying Latin, he quite by himself, as he studied Greek and German, and I with such help as I could find in reciting to a kindly old minister, who had forgotten most of his own Latin, and whom I do not now wish to blame for falling asleep over the lessons in my presence; I did not know them well enough to keep him up to the work. My friend and I read the language, he more and I less, and we tried to speak it together, to give ourselves consequence, and to have the pleasure of saying before some people's faces what we should otherwise have said behind their backs; I should not now undertake to speak Latin to achieve either of these aims. Besides this, we read a great deal together, mainly Shakespeare and Cervantes. I

had a task of a certain number of thousand ems a day, and when I had finished that I was free to do what I liked; he would stop work at the same time, and then we would take our Don Quixote into some clean, sweet beech-woods there were near the village, and laugh our hearts out over it. I can see my friend's strange face now, very regular, very fine, and smooth as a girl's, with quaint blue eyes, shut long, long ago, to this *dolce lome;* and some day I should like to tell all about him; but this is not the place. When the war broke out he left the position he had got by that time in some college or academy farther west and went into the army. One morning, in Louisiana, he was killed by a guerilla who got a shot at him when he was a little way from his company, and who was probably proud of picking off the Yankee captain. But as yet such a fate was unimaginable. He was the first friend of my youth; he was older than I by five or six years; but we met in an equality of ambition and purpose, though he was rather more inclined to the severity of the scholar's ideal, and I hoped to slip through somehow with a mere literary use of my learning.

VII.

As I have tried to say, the printers of that day had nearly all some affinity with literature, if not some love of it; it was in a sort always at their fingers-ends, and they must have got some touch of it whether they would or not. They thought their trade a poor one, moneywise, but they were fond of it and they did not often forsake it. Their hope was somehow to get hold of a country paper and become editors and publishers; and my friend and I, when he was twenty-four and I eighteen, once crossed over into Pennsylvania, where we had heard there was a paper for sale; but we had not the courage to offer even promises to pay for it. The craft had a repute for insolvency which it merited, and it was at odds with the community at large by reason of something not immediately intelligible in it, or at least not classifiable. I remember that when I began to write a certain story of mine, I told Mark Twain, who was once a printer, that I was going to make the hero a printer, and he said, "Better not. People will not understand him. Printing is something every village has in it, but it is always a sort of mystery, and the reader does not like to be perplexed by something that he thinks he knows about." This seemed very acute and just, though I made my hero

a printer all the same, and I offer it to the public as a light on the anomalous relation the country printer bears to his fellow-citizens. They see him following his strange calling among them, but to neither wealth nor worship, and they cannot understand why he does not take up something else, something respectable and remunerative; they feel that there must be something weak, something wrong in a man who is willing to wear his life out in a vocation which keeps him poor and dependent on the favor they grudge him. It is like the relation which all the arts bear to the world, and which is peculiarly thankless in a purely commercial civilization like ours; though I cannot pretend that printing is an art in the highest sense. I have heard old journeymen claim that it was a profession and ought to rank with the learned professions, but I am afraid that was from too fond a pride in it. It is in one sort a handicraft, like any other, like carpentering or stone-cutting; but it has its artistic delight, as every handicraft has. There is the ideal in all work; and I have had moments of unsurpassed gladness in feeling that I had come very near the ideal in what I had done in my trade. This joy is the right of every worker, and in so far as modern methods have taken it from him they have wronged him. I can under-

stand Ruskin in his wish to restore it to some of the handicrafts which have lost it in the "base mechanical" operations of the great manufactories, where men spend their lives in making one thing, or a part of a thing, and cannot follow their work constructively. If that were to be the end, the operative would forever lose the delight in work which is the best thing in the world. But I hope this is not to be the end, and that when people like again to make things for use and not merely for profit, the workman will have again the reward that is more than wages.

I know that in the old-fashioned country printing-office we had this, and we enjoyed our trade as the decorative art it also is. Questions of taste constantly arose in the arrangement of a title-page, the display of a placard or a handbill, the use of this type or that. They did not go far, these questions, but they employed the critical faculty and the æsthetic instinct, and they allied us, however slightly and unconsciously, with the creators of the beautiful.

But now, it must be confessed, printing has shared the fate of all other handicrafts. Thanks to united labor, it is better paid in each of its subdivisions than it once was as a whole. In my time, the hire of a first-rate country printer, who usually worked by the

week, was a dollar a day; but of course this was not so little in 1852 as it would be in 1892. My childish remembrance is of the journeymen working two hours after supper, every night, so as to make out a day of twelve hours; but at the time I write of the day of ten hours was the law and the rule, and nobody worked longer, except when the President's Message was to be put in type, or on some other august occasion.

The pay is not only increased in proportion to the cost of living, but it is really greater, and the conditions are all very much better. But I believe no apprentice now learns the whole trade, and each of our printers, forty years ago, would have known how to do everything in the kind of office he hoped to own. He would have had to make a good many things which the printer now buys, and first among them the rollers, which are used for inking the type on the press. These were of a composition of glue and molasses, and were of an india-rubbery elasticity and consistency, as long as they were in good condition. But with use and time they became hard, the ink smeared on them, and they failed to impart it evenly to the type; they had to be thrown away, or melted over again. This was done on the office stove, in a large bucket which they were cut up into, with fresh

glue and molasses added. It seems in the retrospect to have been rather a simple affair, and I do not now see why casting a roller should have involved so much absolute failure, and rarely have given a satisfactory result. The mould was a large copper cylinder, and the wooden core of the roller was fixed in place by an iron cap and foot-piece. The mixture boiled away, as it now seems to me, for days, and far into the sleepy nights, when as a child I was proud of sitting up with it very late. Then at some weird hour, my father or my brother poured it into the mould, and we went home and left the rest with fate. The next morning the whole office crowded round to see the roller drawn from the mould, and it usually came out with such long hollows and gaps in its sides that it had to be cut up at once and melted over again. At present, all rollers are bought somewhere in New York or Chicago, I believe, and a printer would no more think of making a roller than of making any other part of his press. "And you know," said my brother, who told me of this change, "we don't wet the paper now." "Good heavens," said I, "you don't print it *dry!*" "Yes, and it doesn't blur any more than if it were wet." I suppose wetting the paper was a usage that antedated the invention of movable type. It used to

be drawn, quire by quire, through a vat of clear water, and then the night before publication day it was turned and sprinkled. Now it was printed dry, I felt as if it were time to class Benjamin Franklin with the sun-myths.

VIII.

Publication day was always a time of great excitement. We were busy all the morning getting the last editorials and the latest news in type, and when the paper went to press in the afternoon the entire force was drafted to the work of helping the engine and the press through their various disabilities and reluctances. Several hands were needed to run the press, even when it was in a willing frame; others folded the papers as they came from it; as many more were called from their wonted work to address them to the subscribers; for with the well-known fickleness of their sex, the young ladies of the village ceased to do this as soon as the novelty of the affair wore off. Still, the office was always rather a lively scene, for the paper was not delivered at the village houses, and each subscriber came and got his copy; the villagers began to come about the hour we went to press, the neighboring farmers called next day and throughout the week. Nearly everybody who witnessed the throes of

our machinery had advice or sympathy to offer, and in a place where many people were of a mechanical turn the spectacular failure of the editor's additions and improvements was naturally a source of public entertainment; perhaps others got as much pleasure out of his inventions as he did.

Of course, about election time the excitement was intensified; we had no railroad or telegraphic communication with the outer world, but it was felt that we somehow had the news, and it was known that we had the latest papers from Cleveland, and that our sheet would report the intelligence from them. After all, however, there was nothing very burning or seething in the eagerness of our subscribers. They could wait; their knowledge of the event would not change it, or add or take away one vote either way. I dare say it is not so very different now, when the railroad and the telegraph have made the little place simultaneous with New York and London. We people who fret our lives out in cities do not know how tranquil life in the country still is. We talk of the whirl and rush, as if it went on everywhere, but if you will leave the express train anywhere and pass five miles into the country, away from the great through lines, you will not find the whirl and rush. People sometimes go

mad there from the dulness and ennui, as in the cities they sometimes go mad from the stress and the struggle; and the problem of equalizing conditions has no phase more interesting than that of getting the good of the city and the country out of the one into the other. The old-fashioned country newspaper formed almost the sole intellectual experience of the remote and quiet folks who dwelt in their lonely farmsteads on the borders of the woods, with few neighbors and infrequent visits to the township centre, where the church, a store or two, and a tavern constituted a village. They got it out of the post-office there once a week, and read it in the scanty leisure left them by their farm-work or their household drudgery, and I dare say they found it interesting. There were some men in every neighborhood, tongueyer than the rest, who, when they called on us, seemed to have got it by heart, and who were ready to defend or combat its positions with all comers; this sort usually took some other paper, too, an agricultural paper, or the New York *Trybune*, as they called it; or a weekly edition of a Cleveland journal. It was generally believed that Horace Greeley wrote everything in the *Trybune*, and when a country subscriber unfolded his *Trybune*, he said, with comfortable expectation, "Well, let's see

what old Horace says *this* week." But by far the greater number of our subscribers took no paper but our own. I do not know whether there is much more reading done now on the farms, but I doubt it. In the villages, however, the circulation of the nearest city dailies is pretty general, and there is a large sale of the Sunday editions. I am not sure that this is an advantage, but in the undeniable decay of interest in the local preaching, some sort of mental relish for the only day of leisure is necessary. It is not so much a pity that they read the Sunday papers, as that the Sunday papers are so bad. If they were carefully and conscientiously made up, they would be of great use; they wait their reformer, and they do not seem impatient for him.

In the old time, we printers were rather more in touch with the world outside on the journalistic lines than most of our fellow-villagers, but otherwise we were as remote as any of them, and the weekly issue of the paper had not often anything tumultuously exciting for us. The greatest event of our year was the publication of the President's Message, which was a thrill in my childish life long before I had any conception of its meaning. I fancy that the patent inside, now so universally used by the country papers, orig-

inated in the custom which the printers within easy reach of a large city had of supplying themselves with an edition of the President's Message, to be folded into their own sheet, when they did not print their outside on the back of it. There was always a hot rivalry between the local papers in getting out the Message, whether it was bought ready printed, or whether it was set up in the office and printed in the body of the paper. We had no local rival, but all the same we made haste when it was a question of the Message. The printers filled their cases with type, ready for the early copy of the Message, which the editor used every device to secure; when it was once in hand they worked day and night till it was all up, and then the paper was put to press at once, without regard to the usual publication day; and the community was as nearly electrified as could be with our journalistic enterprise, which was more important in our eyes than the matters the Message treated of.

There is no longer the eager popular expectation of the President's Message that there once seemed to be; and I think it is something of a loss, that ebb of the high tide of political feeling which began with the era of our immense material prosperity. It was a feeling that formed a solidarity of all the citizens, and if it

was not always, or often, the highest interest which can unite men, it was at least not that deadly and selfish cult of business which centres each of us in his own affairs and kills even our curiosity about others. Very likely people were less bent on the pursuit of wealth in those days, because there was less chance to grow rich, but the fact remains that they *were* less bent in that direction, and that they gave their minds to other things more than they do now. I think those other things were larger things, and that our civic type was once nobler than it is. It was before the period of corruption, when it was not yet fully known that dollars can do the work of votes, when the votes as yet rather outnumbered the dollars, and more of us had the one than the other. The great statesman, not the great millionaire, was then the American ideal, and all about in the villages and on the farms the people were eager to know what the President had said to Congress. They are not eager to know now, and that seems rather a pity. Is it because in the war which destroyed slavery, the American Democracy died, and by operation of the same fatal anomaly the American Plutocracy, which Lincoln foreboded, was born; and the people instinctively feel that they have no longer the old interest in President or Congress?

There are those that say so, and, whether they are right or not, it is certain that into the great centres where money is heaped up the life of the country is drained, and the country press has suffered with the other local interests. The railroads penetrate everywhere, and carry the city papers seven times a week, where the home paper pays its tardy visit once, with a patent inside imported from the nearest money-centre, and its few columns of neighborhood gossip, too inconsiderable to be gathered up by the correspondents of the invasive dailies. Other causes have worked against the country press. In counties where there were once two or three papers, there are now eight or ten, without a material increase of population to draw upon for support. The county printing, which the paper of the dominant party could reckon upon, is now shared with other papers of the same politics, and the amateur printing-offices belonging to ingenious boys in every neighborhood get much of the small job-work which once came to the publisher.

It is useless to quarrel with the course of events, for which no one is more to blame than another, though human nature loves a scapegoat, and from time to time we load up some individual with the common sins, and drive him into a wilderness where he seems rather to

enjoy himself than otherwise. I suppose that even if the conditions had continued favorable, the country press could never have become the influence which our editor fondly hoped and earnestly strove to make it. Like all of us who work at all, the country printer had to work too hard; and he had little time to think or to tell how to make life better and truer in any sort. His paper had once perhaps as much influence as the country pulpit; its support was certainly of the same scanty and reluctant sort, and it was without consecration by an avowed self-devotion. He was concerned with the main chance first, and after that there was often no other chance, or he lost sight of it. I should not instance him as an exemplary man, and I should be very far from idealizing him; I should not like even to undertake the task of idealizing a city journalist; and yet, in the retrospect at least, the country printer has his pathos for me—the pathos of a man who began to follow a thankless calling because he loved it, and kept on at it because he loved it, or else because its service had warped and cramped him out of form to follow any other.

POLICE REPORT.

One day in summer, when people whom I had been urging to behave in some degree like human beings persisted in acting rather more like the poor creatures who pass for men and women in most stage-plays, I shut my manuscript in a drawer, and the next morning took an early train into the city. I do not remember just what whim it was that led me to visit the police court: perhaps I went because it was in the dead vast and middle of the summer, and the town afforded little other amusement; perhaps it was because, in my revolt against unreality, I was in the humor to see life whose reality asserts itself every day in the newspapers with indisputable force. If this was so, I was fated to a measure of disappointment, for when the court opened this reality often appeared no more substantial than the fiction with which I had lost my patience at home. But I am bound to say that it was much more entertaining, and that it was, so to speak, much more artistically treated. It resolved itself into

melodrama, or romantic tragedy, having a prevailing comic interest, with moments of intensity, and with effects so thrilling that I came away with a sense of the highest theatrical illusion.

I.

The police court in Boston is an upper room of the temple of justice, and is a large, square, dismal-complexioned chamber, with the usual seams and cracks configuring its walls and ceilings; its high, curtainless windows were long glares of sunless light, crossed with the fine drizzle of an easterly rain on the morning of my visit. About one-third of the floor is allotted to spectators, and supplied with benches of penitential severity; the remaining space is occupied by a series of curved tables set in a horse-shoe, and by a raised platform, railed off from the auditorium, as I may call it, and supporting in successive gradations the clerk's desk, on a very long, narrow table, and the judge's table and easy-chair. At either end of the table on which the clerk's desk was placed was a bar, representing in one case the witness stand, and in the other the prisoner's box; midway, the clerk stood within a screen of open iron-work, hemmed in with books of record and tin boxes full of docketed papers.

Outside of the railing were the desks of two officers of the court, whose proper titles my unfamiliarity with the place disables me from giving. They were both well in flesh, as I remember, and in spite of their blue flannel suits and the exercise of a wise discretion, by which one of them had discarded his waistcoat and neckcloth, they visibly suffered from the moist, close heat which the storm outside had driven into the court-room. From time to time one of them cried out, "Silence!" to quell a restive movement in the audience; and once the cravatless officer left his place, and came down to mine near the door, and drove out the boys who were sitting round me. "Leave!" he shouted. "This is no place for boys!" They went out obediently, and some others just like them came in immediately and took their places. They might have been the same boys, so far as any difference for the better in their looks went. They were not pleasant to the eye, nor to any other sense; and neither were the young men nor old men who for the rest formed the audience of this free dramatic spectacle. Their coat-collars came up above their shirt-collars; but, greasy as they were, the observer could not regret this misfit when chance gave an occasional glimpse of their linen—or their cotton, to be exact. For the

most part, they wore their hair very short, and exposed necks which I should, I believe, have preferred to have covered. Under the influence of the humid heat, and with the wet they brought from the outside, they sent up a really deplorable smell. I do not know that I have a right to criticise the appearance of some of their eyes—they seemed perfectly good eyes to see with, in spite of their sinister or vacant expression and gloomy accessories; and certain scars and mutilations of the face and fingers were the affair of their owners rather than mine. Whenever they fell into talk, an officer of the court marched upon them and crushed them to silence. "This is no place for conversation," he said; and the greater part of them had evidently no disposition or capacity for that art. I believe they were men and boys whose utmost mental effort sufficed to let their mouths hang open in the absorption of the performance, and was by no means equal to comment upon it. I fancied that they came there, day after day, the year round, and enjoyed themselves in their poor way, realizing many of the situations presented by experience of like predicaments, more than by sympathy or an effort of the imagination.

I had taken my place among them next the door, so that if my courage failed me at any time I could go

out without disturbing the others. One need not be a very proud man to objeet to elassing himself with them, and there were moments when I doubted if I eould stand my fellow-speetators mueh longer; but these aeeesses of arroganee passed, as I watehed the preparations for the play with the interest of a noviee. There were already half a dozen polieemen seated at the tables in semieirele, and ehatting pleasantly together; and their number was eonstantly inereased by new arrivals, who, as they eame in, put their round-topped straw hats on one end of the semieirele, and sat down to fill out eertain printed forms, whieh I suppose related to the arrests they had made, for they were presently handed to the elerk, who used them in ealling up the eases. A little apart from the polieemen was a group of young men, whom I took to be the gentlemen of the bar; among them, rather more dapper than the rest, was a eolored lawyer, who afterwards, by an irony of Nemesis, appeared for some desperate and luekless defendants of the white race and of Irish aeeent. By and by two or three desks, placed eonveniently for seeing and hearing everything against the railing on the elerk's right, were oeeupied by reporters, unmistakable with their peneil and paper. Looking from them I saw that the judge's ehair

was now filled by a quiet-looking gentleman, who seemed, behind his speetacles, to be communing with himself in a sad and bored anticipation. At times he leaned forward and spoke with the clerk or one of the gentlemen of the bar, and then fell baek in sober meditation.

Like all other public exhibitions, the poliee eourt failed a little in point of punctuality. It was advertised to open at ninc o'eloek, but it was nearer ten when, after several false alarms, the clerk in a rapid, inarticulate formula declared it now opened, and invoked the blessing of God on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Even then there was a long wait before we of the audienee heard the seuffling of the feet of the prisoners on what seemed a broad stairway behind the barrier at the judge's right, and before any of them came in sight they were commanded by the attendant policeman to sit down, and apparently did so, on the top of the stairs. The clerk now turned towards them with a sheaf of the forms which the policemen had filled out in his hand, and sueccssively addressed them by name:—

"Larry McShane!"

"Here, sor."

"Complained of for being drunk. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty, sor."

"Pay a fine of one dollar and costs, and stand committed to the House of Industry."

He jotted something down on the back of each indictment, and half turned to toss it on to his desk, and then resumed the catalogue of these offenders, accusing and dooming them all in the same weary and passionless monotone.

I confess that I had at the time the strongest curiosity to see them, but it has since struck me that it was a finer effect merely to hear their voices in response, and to leave their figures and faces to the fancy. Sometimes the voice that answered "Guilty" was youthful, and sometimes, I grieve to say, it was feminine, though under the circumstances it had naturally that subdued tone which is thought such an excellent thing in woman. Usually, however, the voices were old and raucous, as if they had many times made the same plea in the same place, and they pronounced sir *sor*. The clerk's sheaf of accusations being exhausted, they all apparently scuffled downstairs again. But a number must have remained, for now, after this sort of overture, the entertainment began in earnest, the actors on the scene appearing as they were summoned from the same invisible space

behind the railing, which I think was probably sunk a little lower than the level of the auditorium, and which might, to humor the theatrical illusion, be regarded as the green-room.

II.

The first piece was what I may call a little Police Pastoral, in recognition of the pretty touch of poetry which graced it. A half-grown, baddish-looking boy was arraigned for assault and battery, and took his place at one end of that long table on which rested the clerk's desk, while a young girl of thirteen or fourteen advanced from the audience, and placed herself at the other end. She was dressed in a well-fitting ready-made suit, which somehow suggested itself as having been "marked down" to come within her means; and she wore a cheap yet tasteful hat, under which her face, as honest as it was comely, looked modestly up at the judge when he questioned her. It appeared that she was passing the apple-stand which the defendant was keeping for his mother, when he had suddenly abandoned his charge, followed her into a gate where she had taken refuge, and struck her; her cries attracted the police, and he was arrested. The officer corroborated her story, and then the judge

made a signal to the prisoner, by which it seemed that he was privileged to cross-question his accuser. The injured youth seized the occasion, and in a loud-bullying, yet plaintive tone proceeded as best he could to damage the case against him.

He: "Didn't you pass my mother's stand with them girls the day before?"

She, frankly: "Yes, I *did*."

He: "And didn't you laugh at me, and call me an apple-woman?"

She, as before: "Yes, I *did*."

He: "And hain't you hit *me*, sometimes, before this?"

She, evasively: "I've never hit you to hurt you."

He: "Now, that hain't the question! The question is whether you've ever hit me."

She: "Yes, I have—when you were trying to hold me. It was the other girls called you names. I only called you names once."

He: "I want to know whether I hurt you any when you hollered out that way?"

She: "Yes, you *did*. And if I hadn't screamed you *would* have done it. I don't suppose you'd have hurt me a great *deal*, but you have hurt *some* of the girls."

The Judge: "Did he bruise you severely when he struck you?"

She, with a relenting glance, full of soft compassion, at her enemy: "Well, he didn't bruise me *very* much."

The Judge: "Has he been in the habit of assaulting the other young girls?"

She: "He never did *me* before." Then, with a sudden burst, "And I think I was every bit as much to blame as he was! I had no business to tease him."

Here the judge, instead of joining the hands of these children, and sending them forward with his blessing, to dance and sing a little duet together, as would have happened on any other stage, said that he would fine the defendant seven dollars. The defendant gave way to a burst of grief, and the plaintiff, astonished at this untoward conclusion, threw the judge a pathetic and reproachful look, and left the stand in painful bewilderment. I felt sorry for her, but I could not share her pity for the defendant, and my light mind was quickly distracted by the next piece.

III.

I MAY say here that the features of the performance followed one another rapidly, as at a variety theatre, without any disagreeable waits or the drop of a cur-

tain. If I had anything to complain of it was the swiftness of their suecession. I was not yet habituated to this, when I found the seene occupied by the two prineipal actors in a laughable little interludc of Habitual Drunkenness. A powerfully built, middle-aged Irishman, with evidences of coal-heaving thick upon his hands and ground into his face to the roots of his hair, was standing at one end of that long table, aud listening to the tale of the policeman who, finding him quarrelsomely and noisily drunk, and not being able to prevail with him to go homc, had arrested him. When he finished, the judge said to the defendant, who had stood rolling his eyes—eonspieuous from the blaek around them—upon the spectators, as if at a loss to makc out what all this might be about, that he could ask any questions he liked of the plaintiff.

"I don't want to ask him anything, sor," replied thc defendant, like one surprised at being expeeted to take an interest in some alien affair.

"Have you ever seen the defendant drunk before?" asked the judge.

"Yes, your honor; I've seen him drunk half a dozen times, and I've taken him home to keep him out of harm's way. He's an industrious man when he isn't in drink."

"Is he usually disorderly when drunk?"

"Well, he and his wife generally fight when he gets home," the policeman suggested.

The judge desisted, and the defendant's counsel rose, and signified his intention to cross-question the plaintiff: the counsel was that attorney of African race whom I have mentioned.

"Now, we don't deny that the defendant was drunk at the time of his arrest; but the question is whether he is an habitual drunkard. How many times have you seen him drunk the past month?"

"About half a dozen times."

"Seven times?"

"I can't say."

"Three times?"

"More than three times."

"More than twice you will swear to?"

"Yes."

"Now, I wish you to be very careful, please: can you state, under oath, that you have seen him drunk four times?"

"Yes," said the policeman, "I can swear to that."

"Very good," said the counsel, with the air of having caught the witness tripping. "That is all."

Aside from the satisfaction that one naturally feels

in seeing any polieeman bullied, I think it did me good to have my learned eolored brother badger a white man. The thing was so long the other way, in every walk of life, that for the sake of the bad old times, when the sight would have been something to destroy the eonstitution and subvert soeial order, I could have wished that he might have sueeeeded better in browbeating his witness. But it was really a failure, as far as eoncerned his objeet.

"The question, your honor," the lawyer added, turning to the judge, "is, what *is* habitual drunkenness? I should like to ask the defendant a query or two. Now, Mr. O'Ryan, how often do you indulge yourself in a soeial glass?"

"Sor?"

"How often do you drink?"

"Whenever I ean get it, sor."

The audienee appreeiated this frankness, and were sileneed by a threatening foray of the eravatless offieer.

"You mean," suggested the attorney, smoothly, "that you take a drink of beer, now and then, when you are at work."

"I mane that, sor. A horse eouldn't do widout it."

"Very good. But you deny that you are habitually intoxieated?"

"Sor?"

"You are not in the habit of getting drunk?"

"No, sor!"

"Very good. You are not in the habit of getting drunk."

"I never get dhrunk whin I'm at work sor. I get dhrunk Saturday nights."

"Yes; when you have had a hard week's work. I understand that"—

"I have a hard wake's worruk every wake!" interrupted the defendant.

"But this is a thing that has grown upon you of late, as I understand. You were formerly a sober, temperate man, as your habits of industry imply."

"Sor?"

"You have lately given way to a fondness for liquor, but up to within six months or a year ago you never drank to excess."

"No, sor! I've dhrunk ever since I was born, and I'll dhrink till I die."

The officer could not keep us quiet, now. The counsel looked down at his table in a futile way, and then took his seat after some rambling observations, amid smiles of ironical congratulation from the other gentlemen of the bar.

The defendant confronted the judge with the calm face of a man who has established his innocence beyond cavil.

"What is the reputation of this man in his neighborhood?" inquired the judge of the policeman.

"He's an ugly fellow. And his wife is full as bad. They generally get drunk together."

"Any children?"

"No, sir."

The defendant regarded the judge with heightened satisfaction in this confirmation of his own declaration. The judge leaned over, and said in a confidential way to the clerk, "Give him six months in the House of Correction."

A wild lament broke from the audience, and a woman with a face bruised to a symphony in green, yellow, and black thus identified herself as the wife of the defendant, who stood vacantly turning his cap round in his hand while sympathizing friends hurried her from the room. The poor creature probably knew that if in their late differences she had got more than she deserved, she had not got more than she had been willing to give, and was moved by this reflection. Other moralists, who do not like to treat woman as a reasonable being, may attribute her sorrow to mere

blind tenderness, or hysterical excitement. I could not see that it touched the spectators in any way; and I suspect that, whatever was thought of her escape from a like fate, there was a general acquiescence in the justice of his. He was either stunned by it, or failed to take it in, for he remained standing at the end of the table and facing the judge, till the policeman in charge took him by the arm and stood him aside.

IV.

He sat down, and I saw him no more; but I had no time to regret him, for his place was instantly occupied by a person who stepped within the bar from the audience. I had already noticed him coming in and going out of the court-room, apparently under strong excitement, and hovering about, now among the gentlemen of the bar, and now among friends in the audience. He had an excited and eccentric look, and yet he looked like a gentleman—a gentleman in distress of mind; I had supposed that he could not be one of the criminal classes, or he would scarcely have been allowed so much at large. At the same time that he took his place he was confronted from the other end of the long table by a person whom I will call a lady, because I observed that every one else did so.

This lady's person tended to fat; she had a large, red face, and I learned without surprise that she was a cook. She wore a crimson shawl, and a bonnet abounding in blossoms and vegetables of striking colors, and she had one arm, between the wrist and elbow, impressively swathed in linen; she caressed, as it were, a small water-pitcher, which I felt, in spite of its ordinary appearance, was somehow historical. In fact, it came out that this pitcher played an important part in the assault which the lady accused the gentleman at the other end of the table of committing upon her.

It seemed from her story that the gentleman was a boarder in the house where she was cook, and that he was in the habit of intruding upon her in the kitchen against her will and express command. A week before (I understood that she had spent the intervening time in suffering and disability) she had ordered him out, and he had turned furiously upon her with an uplifted chair and struck her on the arm with it, and then had thrown at her head the pitcher which she now held in her hands. There were other circumstances of outrage, which I cannot now recall, but they are not important in view of the leading facts.

Further testimony in behalf of the plaintiff was offered by another lady, whose countenance expressed second-girl as unmistakably as that of the plaintiff expressed cook. She was of the dish-faced Irish type, and whereas the cook was of an Old-World robustness, her witness had the pallor and flat-chestedness of the women of her race who are born in America; she preferred several shades of blue in her costume, which was of ready-made and marked-down effect. This lady with difficulty comprehended the questions intended to elicit her name and the fact of her acquaintance with the plaintiff, and I noticed a like density of understanding in most of the other persons testifying or arraigned in this court. In fact, I came to wonder if the thick-headedness of average uneducated people was not much greater than I had hitherto suspected, in my easy optimism. It was certainly inconceivable why, with intelligence enough to come in when it rained, the cook should have summoned this witness. She testified at once that she had not seen the assault, and did not know that the cook had been hurt; and no prompting of the plaintiff's counsel could inspire her with a better recollection. In the hands of the defendant's lawyer she developed the fact that his client was reputed a quiet, inoffensive boarder, and that

she never knew of any displeasures between him and the cook.

"Did you ever see this lady intoxicated?" inquired the lawyer.

The witness reflected. "I don't understand you," she answered, finally.

"Have you ever known her to be overcome by drink?"

The witness considered this point also, and in due time gave it up, and turned a face of blank appeal upon the judge, who came to her rescue.

"Does she drink,—drink liquor? Does she get drunk?"

"*Oh!* Oh, yes; she's tipsy sometimes."

"Was she tipsy," asked the lawyer, "on the day of the alleged assault?"

The witness again turned to the magistrate for help.

"Was she tipsy on the day when she says this gentleman struck her with a chair, and threw the pitcher at her head?"

"Yes, sir," replied the witness, "she was."

"Was she very tipsy?" the lawyer pursued.

The witness was equal to this question. "Well, yes, sir, she was. Any way, she hadn't left anything in the bottle on her bureau."

"When did you see the bottle full?"

"The night before. Or in the evening. She commenced drinking in the night."

"What was in the bottle?"

"A pint of whiskey."

"That will do," said the lawyer.

The witness stepped down, and genteelly resumed her place near the plaintiff. Neither of the ladies changed countenance, or seemed in any wise aware that the testimony just given had been detrimental to the plaintiff's cause. They talked pleasantly together, and were presently alike interested in the testimony of a witness to the defendant's good character. He testified that the defendant was a notoriously peaceable person, who was in some sort of scientific employment, but where or what I could not make out; he was a college graduate, and it was quite unimaginable to the witness that he should be the object of this sort of charge.

When the witness stood aside, the defendant was allowed to testify in his own behalf, which he did with great energy. He provided himself with a chair, and when he came to the question of the assault he dramatized the scene with appropriate action. He described with vividness the relative positions of himself and the cook when, on the day given, he went into

the kitchen to see if the landlady were there, and was ordered out by her. "She didn't give me time to go, but caught up a chair, and came at me, thus!" Here he represented with the chair in his hand an assault that made the reporters, who sat near him, quail before the violence of the mere dumb-show. "I caught the rung of the chair in my hand, thus, and instinctively pushed it, thus. I suppose," he added, in diction of memorable elegance, "that the impact of the chair in falling back against her wrist may have produced the contusions of which she complains."

The judge and the bar smiled; the audience, not understanding, looked serious.

"And what," said the judge, "about throwing the pitcher at her?"

"I never saw the pitcher, your honor, till I saw it in court. I threw no pitcher at her, but retreated from the kitchen as quickly as possible."

"That will do," said the judge. The plaintiff's counsel did the best that could be done for no case at all in a brief argument. The judge heard him patiently, and then quietly remarked, "The charge is dismissed. The defendant is discharged. Call the next case."

The plaintiff had probably imagined that the affair

was going in her favor. She evidently required the explanation of her counsel that it had gone against her, and all was over; for she looked at the judge in some surprise, before she turned and walked out of the court-room with quiet dignity, still caressing her pitcher, and amicably accompanied by the other lady, her damaging witness.

V.

Before she was well out of the door, a lady-like young woman in black was on the stand, testifying against a prisoner, who did not confront her from the other end of the long table, but stood where he seemed to have been seated on the top of those stairs I have imagined behind the railing. He looked twenty one or two years of age, and he had not at all a bad face, but rather refined; he was well dressed, and was gentleman-like in the same degree that she was lady-like. From her testimony it appeared to me that his offense was one that might fitly be condoned, and in my ignorance I was surprised to find that it was taken seriously by the court. She had seen him, from the top of some steps in the shop where she was employed, open a drawer in the book-keeper's desk, and take out of it a revolver and some postage-stamps; but on his discovering her he had instantly replaced them and

tried to make his escape. She gave her evidence in a low voice, and, as I thought, reluctantly; and one could very well imagine that she might have regretted causing his arrest; but it was to be considered that her own reputation was probably at stake, and if his theft had succeeded she might have been accused of it. When she stood aside, the judge turned to the defendant, who had kept quite still, nervously twisting something between his fingers, and questioned him. He did not attempt to deny the facts; he admitted them, but urged that he had immediately put the stamps and pistol back into the drawer, from which, indeed, he had hardly lifted them. The judge heard him patiently, and the young man went on, with something of encouragement, to explain that he only meant to take the things to spite the owner of the shop, on account of some grudge between them, and that he had not realized that it was stealing. He besought the judge, in terms that were moving, but not abject, to deal mercifully with him; and he stood twisting that invisible something between his fingers, and keeping his eyes fixed on those of the magistrate with a miserable smile, while he promised that he would not offend again.

The judge passed his hand to and fro over his chin,

and now dropped his eyes, and now glanced at the culprit, who seemed scarcely more unhappy.

"Haven't I seen you here before?" he asked at last.

"Yes," I could hardly hear the prisoner assent.

"How often?"

"Twice."

"What for?"

"Theft," gasped the wretched creature.

The judge moved in his chair with a discomfort that he had not shown throughout the morning's business. "If this were the first time, or the second, I should have been glad to let you off with a slight fine. But I can't do that now. I must send you to the House of Correction." He nodded to the clerk: "Two months."

The prisoner remained, with that nervous twisting of his fingers, eying the judge with his vague smile, as if he could not realize what had befallen. He did not sit down till the next culprit rose and stood near him. Then a sort of fatal change passed over his face. It looked like despair. I confess that I had not much heart for his successor. I was sick, thinking how, so far as this world was concerned, this wretch had been sent to hell; for the House of Correction is not a

purgatory even, out of which one can hopefully undertake to pray perieulant spirits. To be sure, the police eourt is not a eure of souls; and doubtless his doom was as light as the law allowed. But I could have wished that the judge had distrusted his memory, or taken on his conscience the merciful sin of ignoring it. He seemed very patient, and I do not question but he acted according to light and knowledge. This may have been a hopeless thief. But it was nevertheless a terrible fate. The chances were a thousand against one that he should hereafter be anything but a thief, if he were not worse. After all, when one thinks of what the consequences of justice are, one doubts if there is any justice in it. Perhaps the thing we call mercy is the divine conception of justice.

VI.

It was a thief again who was on the stage; but not a thief like that other, who, for all the reality there was in the spectacle, might have gone behind the scenes and washed the chalk off his white face. This thief was of the kind whose fortunes the old naturalistic novelists were fond of following in fictions of autobiographic form, and who sometimes actually wrote their own histories; a conventional thief, of

those dear to De Foe and the Spanish picaresque romaneers, with a flavor of good literature about him. Nothing could have been more classic in incident than the story of the plaintiff, an honest-looking young fellow, who testified that he had met the prisoner on the street, and, learning that he was out of work and out of money, had taken him home to his room and shared his bed with him. I do not know in just what calling this primitive and trustful hospitality is practiced; the plaintiff looked and was dressed like a workingman. His strange bedfellow proved an early riser; he stole away without disturbing his host, and carried with him all the money that was in his host's pockets. By an odd turn of luck the two encountered shortly after breakfast, and the prisoner ran. The plaintiff followed, but the other eluded him, and was again sauntering about in safety, when the eye of a third actor in the drama fell upon him. This was a young man who kept some sort of small shop, and who was called to the witness-stand in behalf of the prosecution. He was as stupid as he could well be in some respects, and very simple questions had to be repeated several times to him. Yet he had the ferret-like instinct of the thief-catcher, and he instantly saw that his look fluttered the guilty rogue, who straightway turned and

fled. But this time he had a sharper pursuer than his host, and he was coursed through all his turns and windings, up stairs and down, in houses and out, and gripped at last.

"As soon as I saw him start to run," said the witness, who told his story with a graphic jauntiness, "I knowed he'd got something."

"You *didn't* know I'd got anything!" exclaimed the thief.

"I knowed you'd get ninety days if I caught up with you," retorted the witness, wagging his head triumphantly.

As the officer entered the station-house with his prisoner, the host, by another odd chance, was coming out, after stating his loss to the police, and identified his truant guest.

The money, all but thirty cents, was found upon him; and though he represented that he had lawfully earned it by haying in Dedham, the fact that it was in notes of the denominations which the plaintiff remembered was counted against him, and he got the ninety days which his captor had prophesied. He, too, sat down, and I saw him no more.

VII.

Now arose literally a cloud of witnesses, who came forward from some of the back seats, and occupied the benches hitherto held by the plaintiffs and witnesses in the preceding cases. They were of all shades of blackness, and of both sexes and divers ages, and they were there in their solemn best clothes, with their faces full of a decorous if superficial seriousness. I must except from this sweeping assertion, however, the lady who was the defendant in the case: she was a young person, with a great deal of what is called style about her, and I had seen her going and coming throughout the morning in a high excitement, which she seemed to enjoy. It is difficult for a lady whose lips have such a generous breadth and such a fine outward roll to keep from smiling, perhaps, under any circumstances; and it may have been light-heartedness rather than light-mindedness that enabled her to support so gayly a responsibility that weighed down all the other parties concerned. She wore a tight-skirted black walking-dress, with a waist of perhaps caricatured smallness; her hat was full of red and yellow flowers; on her hands, which were in drawing with her lips rather than her waist, were a pair of white kid gloves. As she advanced to take her place inside

the prisoner's bar she gave in charge to a very mournful-looking elder of her race a little girl, two or three years of age, as fashionably dressed as herself, and tottering upon little high-heeled boots. The old man lifted the child in his arms, and funereally took his seat among the witnesses, while the culprit turned her full-blown smile upon the judge, and confidently pleaded not guilty to the clerk's reading of the indictment, in which she was charged with threatening the person and life of the plaintiff. At the same moment a sort of pleased expectation lighted up all those dull countenances in the court-room, which had been growing more and more jaded under the process of the accusations and condemnations. The soddenest *habitué* of the place brightened; the lawyers and policemen eased themselves in their chairs, and I fancied that the judge himself relaxed. I could not refuse my sympathy to the general content; I took another respite from the thought of my poor thief, and I too lent myself to the hope of enjoyment from this Laughable After-piece.

The accuser also wore black, but her fashionableness, as compared with that of the defendant, was as the fashionableness of Boston to that of New York; she had studied a subdued elegance, and she wore a

crape veil instead of flowers on her hat. She was of a sort of dusky pallor, and her features had not the Congoish fullness nor her skin the brilliancy of the defendant's. Her taste in kid gloves was a decorous black.

She testified that she was employed as second-girl in a respectable family, and that the day before she had received a visit at the door from the defendant, who had invited her to come down the street to a certain point, and be beaten within an inch of her life. On her failure to appear, the defendant came again, and notified her that she should hold the beating in store for her, and bestow it whenever she caught her out-of-doors. These visits and threats had terrified the plaintiff, and annoyed the respectable family with which she lived, and she had invoked the law.

During the delivery of her complaint, the defendant had been lifting and lowering herself by the bar at which she stood, in anticipation of the judge's permission to question the plaintiff. At a nod from him she now flung herself half across it.

"What'd I say I'd whip you *for?*"

The Plaintiff, thoughtfully: "What'd you say you'd whip me for?"

The Defendant, beating the railing with her hand: "Yes, that's what I ast you: what *for?*"

The Plaintiff, with dignity: "I don't know as you *told* me what for."

The Defendant: "Now, now, none o' that! You just answer my question."

The Judge: "She has answered it."

The Defendant, after a moment of surprise: "Well, then, I'll ast her another question. Didn't I tell you if I ever caught you goin' to a ball with my husband ag'in I'd"—

The Plaintiff: "I didn't go to no ball with your husband!"

The Defendant: "You didn't go with him! Ah"—

The Plaintiff: "I went with the crowd. I didn't know who I went with."

The Defendant: "Well, I know who paid fifty cents for your ticket! Why don't he give me any of his money? Hain't spent fifty cents on me or his child, there, since it was born. An' he goes with you all the time,—to church, and everywhere."

The Judge: "That will do."

The plaintiff, who had listened "with sick and scornful looks averse," stepped from the stand, and a dusky gentlewoman, as she looked, took her place, and corroborated her testimony. She also wore genteel black, and she haughtily turned from the defendant's

splendors as she answered much the same questions that the latter had put to the plaintiff. She used her with the disdain that a lady who takes care of bank parlors may show to a social inferior with whom her grandson has been trapped into a distasteful marriage, and she expressed by a certain lift of the chin and a fall of the eyelids the absence of all quality in her granddaughter-in-law, as no words could have done it. I suppose it will be long before these poor creatures will cease to seem as if they were playing at our social conditions, or the prejudices and passions when painted black will seem otherwise than funny. But if this old lady had been born a duchess, or the daughter of a merchant one remove from retail trade, she could not have represented the unrelenting dowager more vividly. She bore witness to the blameless character of the plaintiff, to whom her grandson had paid only those attentions permissible from a gentleman unhappy in his marriage, and living apart from his wife,—a wife, she insinuated, unworthy both before and since the union which she had used sinister arts in forming with a family every way above her. She did not overdo the part, and she descended from the stand with the same hauteur toward the old man who succeeded her as she had shown his daughter.

The hapless sire—for this was the character he attempted—came upon the stand with his forsaken grandchild in his arms, and bore his testimony to the fact that his daughter was a good girl, and had always done what was right, and had been brought up to it. He dwelt upon her fidelity to her virtuous family training, with no apparent sense of incongruity in the facts —elicited by counsel—to the contrary; and he was an old man whose perceptions were somewhat blunted as to other things. He maundered on about his son-in-law's neglect of his wife and child, and the expense which he had been put to on their account, and especially about the wrongs his family had suffered since his son-in-law "got to going" with the plaintiff.

"You say," interpreted the judge, "that the plaintiff tried to seduce the affections of your daughter's husband from her?"

The old man was brought to a long and thoughtful pause, from which he was startled by a repetition of the judge's question. "I—I don' know as I understand you, judge," he faltered.

"Do you mean that the plaintiff—the person whom your daughter threatened to beat—has been trying to get your daughter's husband's affections away from her?"

"Why, he hain't never showed her no affections, judge! He's just left *me* to support her."

"Very well, then. Has the plaintiff tried to get your daughter's husband away from her?"

"I guess not, judge. He hain't never took any notice of my daughter since he married her."

"Well, does your son-in-law go with this person?"

"With who, judge?"

"With the plaintiff."

"De ol' woman. No, he don' go wid de ol' woman any: *she's his gran'mother.*"

"Well, does he go with the young woman?"

"Oh, yes! *Yes!* He goes with the *young* woman. Goes with *her* all the time. That's the *one* he goes with!"

He seemed to be greatly surprised and delighted to find that this point was what the judge had been trying to get at, and the audience shared his pleasure.

I really forget how the case was decided. Perhaps my train, which I began to be anxious not to lose, hurried me away before the *dénoûment*, as often happens with the suburban play-goer. But to one who cares rather for character than for plot it made little difference. I came away thinking that if the actors in the little drama were of another complexion

how finely the situation would have served in a certain sort of intense novel: the patrician dowager, inappeasably offended by the low match her grandson has made, and willing to encourage his *penchant* for the lady of his own rank, whom some fortuity may yet enable him to marry; the wife, with her vulgar but strong passions, stung to madness by the neglect and disdain of her husband's family,—it is certainly a very pretty intrigue, and I commend it to my brother (or sister) novelists who like to be praised by the reviewers for what the reviewers think profundity and power.

VIII.

It was nearly a year later that I paid my second visit to the police court, on a day, like the first, humid and dull, but very close and suffocatingly hot. It was a Monday morning, and there was a full dock, as I have learned that the prisoner's pen at the right of the clerk's desk is called. The clerk was standing with that sheaf of indictments in his hand, and saying, "John O'Brien!" and John O'Brien was answering, "Here, sor!" and the clerk was proceeding, "Complained of for being drunk guilty or not guilty pay a fine of one dollar and costs stand committed to the House of Industry," and then writing on the indict-

ment, and tossing it aside. As I modestly took my stand at the door, till I should gather courage to cross the room to one of the vacant seats which I saw among the policemen, one of these officers of the court approached me and said, "No room for you here to-day, my friend. Go up on the Common." In spite of my share of that purely American vanity which delights in official recognition, I could not be flattered at this, and it was with relief that I found he was addressing a fellow-habitué behind me. The court-room was in fact very full, and there were no seats on the benches ordinarily allotted to spectators; so I at once crossed to my place, and sat down among the policemen, to whom I authorized my intrusion by taking my note-book from my pocket. I have some hopes that the spectators thought me a detective in plain clothes, and revered me accordingly. There was such a person near me, with his club sticking out of his back-pocket, whom I am sure *I* revered.

I had not come to report the events of this session of the court, but to refresh the impressions of my first visit, and I was glad to find them so just. There was, of course, some little change; but the same magistrate was there, serene, patient, mercifully inclined of visage; the colored attorney was there, in charge, as

before, of a disastrous Irish case. The officials who tried to keep order had put off their flannel coats for coats of seersucker, and each carried a Japanese fan; neither wore a collar, now, and I fancied them both a little more in flesh. I think they were even less successful than formerly in quelling disturbances, though they were even more polished in the terms of their appeal. "Too much conversation in the court!" they called out to us collectively. "Conversation *must* cease," they added. Then one, walking up to a benchful of voluble witnesses, would say, "Must cease that conversation," and to my fellow-policemen, "Less conversation, gentlemen;" then again to the room at large, "Stop all conversation in the court," and "All conversation must cease entirely."

The Irish case, which presently came on, was a question of assault and battery between Mrs. O'Hara and Mrs. MacMannis; it had finally to be dismissed, after much testimony to the guilt and peaceable character of both parties. A dozen or more witnesses, were called, principally young girls, who had come in their best, and with whom one could fancy this an occasion of present satisfying excitement and future celebrity. The witnesses were generally more interesting than the parties to the suits, I thought, and I

could not get tired of my fellow-spectators, I suppose, if I went a great many times. I liked to consider the hungry gravity of their countenances, as they listened to the facts elicited, and to speculate as to the ultimate effect upon their moral natures—or their immoral natures—of the gross and palpable shocks daily imparted to them by the details of vice and crime. I have tried to treat my material lightly and entertainingly, as a true reporter should, but I would not have my reader suppose that I did not feel the essential cruelty of an exhibition that tore its poor rags from all that squalid shame, and its mask from all that lying, cowering guilt, or did not suspect how it must harden and deprave those whom it daily entertained. As I dwelt upon the dull visages of the spectators, certain spectacles vaguely related themselves to what I saw: the women who sat and knitted at the sessions of the Revolutionary tribunals of Paris, and overwhelmed with their clamor the judges' feeble impulses to mercy; the roaring populace at the Spanish bull-fight and the Roman arena. Here the same elements were held in absolute silence,—debarred even from "conversation,"—but it was impossible not to feel that here in degree were the conditions that trained men to demand blood, to rave for the guillotine, to turn down

the thumb. This procession of misdeeds, passing under their eyes day after day, must leave a miasm of moral death behind it which no prison or work-house can hereafter cure. We all know that the genius of our law is publicity; but it may be questioned whether criminal trials may not be as profitably kept private as hangings, the popular attendance on which was once supposed to be a bulwark of religion and morality.

IX.

Not that there was any avoidable brutality, or even indecorum, in the conduct of the trials that I saw. A spade was necessarily called a spade; but it seemed to me that with all the lapse of time and foreign alloy the old Puritan seriousness was making itself felt even here, and subduing the tone of the procedure to a grave decency consonant with the inquiries of justice. For it was really justice that was administered, so far as I could see; and justice that was by no means blind, but very open-eyed and keen-sighted. The causes were decided by one man, from evidence usually extracted out of writhing reluctance or abysmal stupidity, and the judgment must be formed and the sentence given where the magistrate sat, amid the confusion of the crowded room. Yet, except in the case

of my poor thief, I did not see him hesitate; and I did not doubt his wisdom even in that case. His decisions seemed to me the result of most patient and wonderfully rapid cogitation, and in dealing with the witnesses he never lost his temper amid densities of dullness which it is quite impossible to do more than indicate. If it were necessary, for example, to establish the fact that a handkerchief was white, it was not to be done without some such colloquy as this:—

"Was it a white handkerchief?"

"Sor?"

"Was the handkerchief white?"

"Was it white, sor?"

"Yes, was it white?"

"Was what white, sor?"

"The handkerchief,—was the handkerchief white?"

"What handkerchief, sor?"

"The handkerchief you just mentioned,—the handkerchief that the defendant dropped."

"I didn't see it, sor."

"Didn't see the handkerchief?"

"Didn't see him drop it, sor."

"Well, did you see the handkerchief?"

"The handkerchief, sor? Oh, yes, sor! *I* saw it,—I saw the *handkerchief*."

"Well, was it *white?*"

"It was, sor."

A boy who complained of another for assaulting him said that he knocked him down.

"How did he knock you down?" asked the judge. "Did he knock you down with his fist or his open hand?"

"Yes, sor."

"Which did he do it with?"

"Put his arms round me and knocked me down."

"Then he didn't *knock* you down. He *threw* you down."

"Yes, sor. He didn't t'row me down. Put his arms round me and knocked me down."

It would be impossible to caricature these things, or to exaggerate the charitable long-suffering that dealt with such cases. Sometimes, as if in mere despair, the judge called the parties to him, and questioned them privately; after which the case seemed to be settled, without further trial.

X.

I have spoken of the theatrical illusion which the proceedings of the court produced; but it often seemed to me also like a school where bad boys and girls were

brought up for punishment. They were, indeed, like children, those poor offenders, and had a sort of innocent simplicity in their wickedness, as good people have in their goodness. One case came up on the occasion of my last visit, which I should like to report verbatim in illustration, but it was of too lurid a sort to be treated by native realism; we can only bear that sort when imported; and undoubtedly there is something still to be said in behalf of decency, at least in the English language. I can only hint that this case was one which in some form or other has been coming up in the police courts ever since police courts began. It must have been familiar to those of Thebes three thousand years ago, and will be so in those of cities which shall look back on Boston in an antiquity as hoary. A hard-working old fool with a month's pay in his pocket and the lost soul with whom he carouses; the theft; the quarrel between the lost soul and the yet more fallen spirit who harbored her and traded at second hand in her perdition as to who stole the fool's money,—what stale materials! Yet I was as much interested as if this were the first case of the kind, and, confronted with the fool and the lost soul and the yet more fallen spirit, I could not feel that they were—let me say it in all seriousness and reverence—

so very bad. Perhaps it was because they stood there reduced to the very nakedness of their shame, and confessedly guilty in what human nature struggles to the last to deny—stood there, as a premise, far past the hope of lying—that they seemed rather subjects for pity than abhorrence. The fool and the lost soul were light and trivial; they even laughed at some of the grosser facts; but that yet more fallen spirit was ghastly tragical, as bit by bit the confession of her business was torn from her; it was torture that seemed hideously out of proportion to any end to be attained; yet as things are it had to be. If then and there some sort of redemption might have begun!

The divine life which is in these poor creatures, as in the best and purest, seemed to be struggling back to some relation and likeness to our average sinful humanity, insisting that if socially and publicly we denied it we should not hold it wholly outcast in our secret hearts, nor refuse it our sympathy. Seeing that on their hopelessly sunken level their common humanity kept that symmetry and proportion which physical deformity shows, one could not doubt that a distorted kindliness and good-nature remained to them in the midst of their depravity: the man was like a gray-headed foolish boy; the two women as simple and

eunning as too naughty ehildren. It eould be imagined that they had their friendly moments; that in extremity they might eare for eaeh other; that even sueh a life as theirs had its reliefs from perdition, as in disease there is relief from pain, and no suffering, out of romanee, is ineessant. They had eertainly their deeorums, their eriterions. On their plane, everything but the theft and the noisy quarrel was of eustom and for granted; but these were misdemeanors and disgraeeful. Like another hostess of the sort, the fallen spirit was aggrieved at these. "Do you think I keep thieves in my house? . . . The tithe of a hair was never lost in my house before. . . . I'll no swaggerers. . . . There eomes no swaggering here. . . . I will bar no honest man my house, nor no eheater; but I do not love swaggering." This is the sum of what she said that she had said in rebuke of the lost soul; that thieving and that swaggering, they ineensed her, and roused in her all the instints of a moral and respeetable person. Humanity adjusts itself to all eonditions, and doubtless God forsakes it in none, but still shapes it to some semblanee of health in its siekness, of order in its disorder, of righteousness in its sin.

I dare say that it was not a wholesome feeling, this lenieney that aequaintanee with sinners produees.

There is much to be urged on that side, and I would like to urge it in considering the effect of daily attendance at the police court upon these spectators whom I have tried to study for the reader's advantage. I must own that the trial at which I have hinted did not affect them seriously, and I doubt if they psychologized upon it. They craned their necks forward and gloated on those women with an unmistakably obscene delight. If they were not beyond being the worse for anything, they were the worse for that trial. Why were they present? Theoretically, perhaps to see that justice was done. But if justice had not been done, how could they have helped it? The public shame seemed purely depraving both to those who suffered it and to those who saw it; and it ought to have been no part of the punishment inflicted. It was horrible, and it sometimes befell those who were accused of nothing, but were merely there to be tortured as witnesses. The lawyer who forced that wretched hostess to confess the character of her house used no unfair means, and he dealt with her as sparingly as he might; yet it was still a shocking spectacle; for she was, curiously enough, not lost to shame, but most alive to it, and, standing there before that brutal crowd, gave up her name to infamy, with atrocious pain and hate; her

face was such a visage as hell-fire might flash into sight among the newly damned, but such as our familiar and respectable sunlight would do well not to reveal to any eyes but magistrates' and priests'. Till one has seen such a thing it is incredible that it should be, and then incredible that it should possibly be of daily occurrence. It was as if the physicians in charge of a public hospital should permit that rabble to be present at a clinique for some loathsome disease, to see that there was no malpractice. If the whole trial could have taken place with closed doors, and with none present but the parties, the lawyers, and the court, what possible harm could have been done? I think none whatever, and I am so sure of this that I would not only have all the police trials secret, but I would never have another police report in print—after this! Then the decency of mystery, and perhaps something of its awe, would surround the vulgar shame and terror of the police court, and a system which does no good would at least do less harm than at present.

XI.

It will be perceived that, like all reformers, I am going too far. I begin with demanding secrecy in police trials, and I end by suggesting that they be abolished

altogether. But in fact nothing struck me more forcibly in the proceedings of the police court than their apparent futility. It was all a mere suppression of symptoms in the vicious classes, not a cure. This one or that one would not steal, or assault and batter, for the given term of his imprisonment, but this was ludicrously far from touching even the tendency to theft and violence. These bad boys and girls came up and had their thrashing or their rap over the knuckles, and were practically bidden by the conditions of our civilization to go and sin some more. Perhaps there *is* no cure for vice and crime. Perhaps there is nothing but prevention, in the application of which there is always difficulty, obscurity, and uncertainty.

The other day, as I passed the court-house, that sad vehicle which is called the Black Maria was driving away from the high portal into which it backs to receive its dead. (The word came inevitably; it is not so far wrong, and it may stand.) The Black Maria may still be Maria (the reason why it should ever have been I do not know), but it is black no longer. On the contrary, it is painted a not uncheerful salmon color, with its false sash picked out in drab; and at first glance, among the rattling express wagons, it looked not unlike an omnibus of the living, and could

have passed through the street without making the casual observer realize what a dreary hearse it was. I dare say it was on its way to the House of Industry, or the House of Correction, or Deer Island, or some of those places where people are put to go from bad to worse; and it was fulfilling its function with a merciful privacy, for its load of convicts might have been dragged through the streets on open hurdles, for the further edification of the populace. Yet I could not help thinking—or perhaps the thought only occurs to me now—that for all reasonable hope as to the future of its inmates the Black Maria might as well have been fitted with one of those ingenious pieces of mechanism sometimes employed by the Enemies of Society, and driven out to some wide, open space where the explosion could do no harm to the vicinity, and so when the horses and driver had removed to a safe distance—

But this is perhaps pessimism.

It is very hard to say what pessimism really is, and almost any honest expression concerning the monotonous endeavor and failure of society to repress the monotonous evolution of the criminal in conditions that render his evolution inevitable, must seem pessimistic. I do not suppose that we ought to kill him merely because we cannot hope to cure him, though

society goes to this extreme in certain extreme cases. Is it right to kill the criminal at one stage of his career, and not at another? After the first conviction the rest is inevitable, and each succeeding conviction follows as a matter of course. A bleaker pessimist than myself might say that all criminal courts seem to be part of the process in the evolution of the criminal. Still, criminal courts must be.

I TALK OF DREAMS.

But it is mostly my own dreams I talk of, and that will somewhat excuse me for talking of dreams at all. Every one knows how delightful the dreams are that one dreams one's self, and how insipid the dreams of others are. I had an illustration of the fact, not many evenings ago, when a company of us got telling dreams. I had by far the best dreams of any; to be quite frank, mine were the only dreams worth listening to; they were richly imaginative, delicately fantastic, exquisitely whimsical, and humorous in the last degree; and I wondered that when the rest could have listened to them they were always eager to cut in with some silly, senseless, tasteless thing, that made me sorry and ashamed for them. I shall not be going too far if I say that it was on their part the grossest betrayal of vanity that I ever witnessed.

But the egotism of some people concerning their dreams is almost incredible. They will come down to

breakfast and bore everybody with a recital of the nonsense that has passed through their brains in sleep, as if they were not bad enough when they were awake; they will not spare the slightest detail; and if, by the mercy of Heaven, they have forgotten something, they will be sure to recollect it, and go back and give it all over again with added circumstance. Such people do not reflect that there is something so purely and intensely personal in dreams that they can rarely interest any one but the dreamer, and that to the dearest friend, the closest relation or connection, they can seldom be otherwise than tedious and impertinent. The habit husbands and wives have of making one another listen to their dreams is especially cruel. They have each other quite helpless, and for this reason they should all the more carefully guard themselves from abusing their advantage. Parents should not afflict their offspring with the rehearsal of their mental maunderings in sleep, and children should learn that one of the first duties a child owes its parents is to spare them the anguish of hearing what it has dreamed about overnight. A like forbearance in regard to the community at large should be taught as the first trait of good manners in the public schools, if we ever come to teach good manners there.

I.

Certain exceptional dreams, however, are so imperatively significant, so vitally important, that it would be wrong to withhold them from the knowledge of those who happened not to dream them, and I feel some such quality in my own dreams so strongly that I could scarcely forgive myself if I did not, however briefly, impart them. It was only the last week, for instance, that I found myself one night in the company of the Duke of Wellington, the great Duke, the Iron one, in fact; and after a few moments of agreeable conversation on topics of interest among gentlemen, his Grace said that now, if I pleased, he would like a couple of those towels. We had not been speaking of towels, that I remember, but it seemed the most natural thing in the world that he should mention them in the connection, whatever it was, and I went at once to get them for him. At the place where they gave out towels, and where I found some very civil people, they told me that what I wanted was not towels, and they gave me instead two bath-gowns, of rather scanty measure, butternut in color and Turkish in texture. The garments made somehow a very strong impression upon me, so that I could draw them now, if I could draw anything, as they looked when

they were held up to me. At the same moment, for no reason that I can allege, I passed from a social to a menial relation to the Duke, and foresaw that when I went back to him with these bath-gowns he would not thank me as one gentleman would another, but would offer me a tip as if I were a servant. This gave me no trouble, for I at once dramatized a little scene between myself and the Duke, in which I should bring him the bath-gowns, and he should offer me the tip, and I should refuse it with a low bow, and say that I was an American. What I did not dramatize, or what seemed to enter into the dialogue quite without my agency, was the Duke's reply to my proud speech. It was foreshown me that he would say, He did not see why that should make any difference. I suppose it was in the hurt I felt at this wound to our national dignity that I now instantly invented the society of some ladies, whom I told of my business with those bath-gowns (I still had them in my hands), and urged them to go with me and call upon the Duke. They expressed, somehow, that they would rather not, and then I urged that the Duke was very handsome. This seemed to end the whole affair, and I passed on to other visions, which I cannot recall.

I have not often had a dream of such international

import, in the offence offered through me to the American character, and its well-known superiority to tips, but I have had others quite as humiliating to me personally. In fact, I am rather in the habit of having such dreams, and I think I may not unjustly attribute to them the disciplined modesty which the reader will hardly fail to detect in the present essay. It has more than once been my fate to find myself during sleep in battle, where I behave with so little courage as to bring discredit upon our flag and shame upon myself. In these circumstances I am not anxious to make even a showing of courage; my one thought is to get away as rapidly and safely as possible. It is said that this is really the wish of all novices under fire, and that the difference between a hero and a coward is that the hero hides it, with a duplicity which finally does him honor, and that the coward frankly runs away. I have never really been in battle, and if it is anything like a battle in dreams, I would not willingly qualify myself to speak by the card on this point. Neither have I ever really been upon the stage, but in dreams I have often been there, and always in a great trouble of mind at not knowing my part. It seems a little odd that I should not sometimes be prepared, but I never am, and I feel that when the curtain

rises I shall be disgraced beyond all reprieve. I dare say it is the suffering from this that awakens me in time, or changes the current of my dreams so that I have never yet been actually hooted from the stage.

II.

But I do not so much object to these ordeals as to some social experiences which I have in dreams. I cannot understand why one should dream of being slighted or snubbed in society, but this is what I have done more than once, though never perhaps so signally as in the instance I am about to give. I found myself in a large room, where people were sitting at lunch or supper around small tables, as is the custom, I am told, at parties in the houses of our nobility and gentry. I was feeling very well; not too proud, I hope, but in harmony with the time and place. I was very well dressed, for me; and as I stood talking to some ladies at one of the tables I was saying some rather brilliant things, for me; I lounged easily on one foot, as I have observed men of fashion do, and as I talked, I flipped my gloves, which I held in one hand, across the other; I remember thinking that this was a peculiarly distinguished action. Upon the whole I comported myself like one in the habit of such affairs, and I turned

to walk away to another table, very well satisfied with myself and with the effect of my splendor upon the ladies. But I had got only a few paces off when I perceived (I could not see with my back turned) one of the ladies lean forward, and heard her say to the rest in a tone of killing condescension and patronage, "*I* don't see why that person isn't as well as another."

I say that I do not like this sort of dreams, and I never would have them if I could help. They make me ask myself if I am really such a snob when I am waking, and this in itself is very unpleasant. If I am, I cannot help hoping that it will not be found out; and in my dreams I am always less sorry for the misdeeds I commit than for their possible discovery. I have done some very bad things in dreams which I have no concern for whatever, except as they seem to threaten me with publicity, or bring me within the penalty of the law; and I believe this is the attitude of most other criminals, remorse being a fiction of the poets, according to the students of the criminal class. It is not agreeable to bring this home to one's self, but the fact is not without its significance in another direction. It implies that both in the case of the dream-criminal and the deed-criminal there is perhaps the same taint of insanity; only in the deed-criminal

it is active, and in the dream-criminal it is passive. In both, the inhibitory clause that forbids evil is off, but the dreamer is not bidden to do evil as the maniac is, or as the malefactor often seems to be. The dreamer is purely unmoral; good and bad are the same to his conscience; he has no more to do with right and wrong than the animals; he is reduced to the state of the merely natural man; and perhaps the primitive men were really like what we all are now in our dreams. Perhaps all life to them was merely dreaming, and they never had anything like our waking consciousness, which seems to be the offspring of conscience, or else the parent of it. Until men passed the first stage of being, perhaps that which we call the soul, for want of a better name, or a worse, could hardly have existed, and perhaps in dreams the soul is mostly absent now. The soul, or the principle that we call the soul, is the supernal criticism of the deeds done in the body, which goes perpetually on in the waking mind. While this watches, and warns or commands, we go right; but when it is off duty we go neither right nor wrong, but are as the beasts that perish.

A common theory is that the dreams which we remember are those we have in the drowse which pre-

eedes sleeping and waking; but I do not altogether aecept this theory. In faet, there is very little proof of it. We often wake from a dream, literally, but there is no proof that we did not dream in the middle of the night the dream whieh is quite as vividly with us in the morning as the one we wake from. I should think that the dream which has some eolor of eonseienee in it was the drowse-dream, and that the dream whieh has none is the sleep-dream; and I believe that the most of our dreams will be found by this test to be sleep-dreams. It is in these we may know what we would be without our souls, without their supernal eritieism of the mind; for the mind keeps on working in them, with the lights of waking knowledge, both experienee and observation, but ruthlessly, remorselessly. By them we may know what the state of the habitual eriminal is, what the state of the lunatie, the animal, the devil is. In them the personal eharaeter eeases; the dreamer is remanded to his type.

III.

It is very strange, in the matter of dreadful dreams, how the body of the terror is, in the eourse of often dreaming, redueed to a mere eonvention. For a long time I was tormented with a nightmare of burglars,

and at first I used to dramatize the whole affair in detail, from the time the burglars approached the house, till they mounted the stairs, and the light of their dark-lanterns shone under the door into my room. Now I have blue-pencilled all that introductory detail; I have a light shining in under my door at once; I know that it is my old burglars; and I have the effect of nightmare without further ceremony. There are other nightmares that still cost me a great deal of trouble in their construction, as for instance the nightmare of clinging to the face of a precipice or the eaves of a lofty building; I have to take as much pains with the arrangement of these as if I were now dreaming them for the first time, and were hardly more than an apprentice in the business.

Perhaps the most universal dream of all is that disgraceful dream of appearing in public places, and in society, with very little or nothing on. This dream spares neither age nor sex, I believe, and I dare say the innocency of wordless infancy is abused by it, and dotage pursued to the tomb. I have not the least doubt Adam and Eve had it in Eden; though up to the moment the fig-leaf came in, it is difficult to imagine just what plight they found themselves in that seemed improper; probably there was some plight.

The most amusing thing about this dream is the sort of defensive process that goes on in the mind, in search of self-justification or explanation. Is there not some peculiar circumstance or special condition, in whose virtue it is wholly right and proper for one to come to a fashionable assembly clad simply in a towel, or to go about the street in nothing but a pair of kid gloves, or of pyjamas at the most? This, or something like it, the mind of the dreamer struggles to establish, with a good deal of anxious appeal to the bystanders and a final sense of the hopelessness of the cause.

One may easily laugh off this sort of dream in the morning, but there are other shameful dreams, whose inculpation projects itself far into the day, and whose infamy often lingers about one till lunch-time. Every one, nearly, has had them, but it is not the kind of dream that any one is fond of telling: the gross vanity of the most besotted dream-teller keeps that sort back. During the forenoon, at least, the victim goes about with the dim question whether he is not really that kind of man harassing him, and a sort of remote fear that he may be. I fancy that as to his nature and as to his mind, he is so, and that but for the supernal criticism, but for his soul, he might be that kind of man in very act and deed.

The dreams we sometimes have about other people are not without a curious suggestion; and the superstitious (of those superstitious who like to invent their own superstitions) might very well imagine that the persons dreamed of had a witting complicity in their facts, as well as the dreamer. This is a conjecture that must of course not be forced to any conclusion. One must not go to one of these persons and ask, however much one would like to ask, "Sir, have you no recollection of such and such a thing, at such and such a time and place, which happened to us in my dream?" Any such person would be fully justified in not answering the question. It would be, of all interviewing, the most intolerable species. Yet a singular interest, a curiosity not altogether indefensible, will attach to these persons in the dreamer's mind, and he will not be without the sense, ever after, that he and they have a secret in common. This is dreadful, but the only thing that I can think to do about it is to urge people to keep out of other people's dreams by every means in their power.

IV.

There are things in dreams very awful, which would not be at all so in waking; quite witless and aimless

things, which at the time were of such baleful effect that it remains forever. I remember dreaming when I was quite a small boy, not more than ten years old, a dream which is vivider in my mind now than anything that happened at the time. I suppose it came remotely from my reading of certain Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque, which had just then fallen into my hands; and it involved simply an action of the fire-company in the little town where I lived. They were working the brakes of the old fire-engine, which would seldom respond to their efforts, and as their hands rose and fell they set up the heart-shaking and soul-desolating cry of "Arms Poe, arms Poe, arms Poe!" This and nothing more was the body of my horror; and if the reader is not moved by it the fault is his and not mine; for I can assure him that nothing in my experience has been more dreadful to me.

I can hardly except the dismaying apparition of a clown, whom I once saw, somewhat later in life, rise through the air in a sitting posture, and float lightly over the house-roof, snapping his fingers, and vaguely smiling, while the antennæ on his forehead, which clowns have in common with some other insects, nodded elastically. I do not know why this portent should have been so terrifying, or indeed that it was a

portent at all, for nothing ever eame of it; what I know is that it was to the last degree threatening and awful. I never got anything but joy out of the eir-euses where this dream must have originated, but the pantomime of Don Giovanni, whieh I saw at the thea-tre, was as grewsome to me waking as it was to me dreaming. The statue of the Commendatore, in getting down from his horse to pursue the wieked hero (I think that is what he gets down for), set an example by whieh a long line of statues afterwards profited in my dreams. For many years, and I do not know but quite up to the time when I adopted burglars as the theme of my nightmares, I was almost always ehased by a marble statue with an uplifted arm, and almost always I ran along the verge of a pond to eseape it. I believe that I got this pond out of my remote ehild-hood, and that it may have been a fish-pond embow-ered by weeping-willows whieh I used to admire in the door-yard of a neighbor. I have somehow a greater respeet for the material of this earlier nightmare than I have for that of the later ones, and no doubt the reader will agree with me that it is mueh more roman-tie to be pursued by a statue than to be threatened by burglars. It is but a few hours ago, however, that I saved myself from these inveterate enemies by waking

up just in time for breakfast. They did not come with that light of dark-lanterns shining under the door, or I should have known them at once, and not had so much bother; but they intimated their presence in the catch of the lock, which would not close securely, and there was some question at first whether they were not ghosts. I thought of tying the door-knob on the inside of my room to my bedpost (a bedpost that has not been in existence for fifty years), but after suffering awhile I decided to speak to them from an upper window. By this time they had turned into a trio of harmless, necessary tramps, and at my appeal to them, absolutely nonsensical as I now believe it to have been, to regard the peculiar circumstances, whatever they were or were not, they did really get up from the back porch where they were seated and go quietly away.

Burglars are not always so easily to be entreated. On one occasion, when I found a party of them digging at the corner of my house on Concord Avenue in Cambridge, and opened the window over them to expostulate, the leader looked up at me in well-affected surprise. He lifted his hand, with a twenty-dollar note in it, toward me, and said: "Oh! Can you change me a twenty-dollar bill?" I expressed a polite

regret that I had not so much money about me, and then he said to the rest, "Go ahead, boys," and they went on undermining my house. I do not know what came of it all.

Of ghosts I have seldom dreamed, so far as I can remember; in fact, I have never dreamed of the kind of ghosts that we are all more or less afraid of, though I have dreamed rather often of the spirits of departed friends. But I once dreamed of dying, and the reader, who has never died yet, may be interested to know what it is like. According to this experience of mine, which I do not claim is typical, it is like a fire kindling in an air-tight stove with paper and shavings; the gathering smoke and gases suddenly burst into flame, and puff the door out, and all is over.

I have not yet been led to execution for the many crimes I have committed in my dreams, but I was once in the hands of a barber, who added to the shaving and shampooing business the art of removing his customers' heads in treatment for headache. As I took my seat in his chair I had some lingering doubts as to the effect of a treatment so drastic, and I ventured to mention the case of a friend of mine, a gentleman somewhat eminent in the law, who after several weeks was still going about without his head. The

barber did not attempt to refute my position. He merely said, "Oh, well, he had such a very thick sort of a head, anyway."

This was a sarcasm, but I think it was urged as a reason, though it may not have been. We rarely bring away from sleep the things that seem so brilliant to us in our dreams. Verse is especially apt to fade away, or turn into doggerel in the memory, and the witty sayings which we contrive to remember will hardly bear the test of daylight. The most perfect thing of the kind out of my own dreams was something that I seemed to wake with the very sound of in my ears. It was after a certain dinner, which had been rather uncommonly gay, with a good deal of very good talk, which seemed to go on all night, and when I woke in the morning some one was saying, "Oh, I shouldn't at all mind his robbing Peter to pay Paul, if I felt sure that Paul would get the money." This I think really humorous, and an extremely neat bit of characterization; I feel free to praise it, because it was not I who said it.

V.

Apparently the greater part of dreams have no more mirth than sense in them. This is perhaps because the man is in dreams reduced to the brute con-

dition, and is the lawless inferior of the waking man intellectually, as the lawless in waking are always the inferiors of the lawful. Some loose thinkers suppose that if we give the rein to imagination it will do great things, but it will really do little things, foolish and worthless things, as we witness in dreams, where it is quite unbridled. It must keep close to truth, and it must be under the law if it would work strongly and sanely. The man in his dreams is really lower than the lunatic in his deliriums. These have a logic of their own; but the dreamer has not even a crazy logic.

"Like a dog, he hunts in dreams,"

and probably his dreams and the dog's are not only alike, but are of the same quality. In his wicked dreams the man is not only animal, he is devil, so wholly is he let into his evils, as the Swedenborgians say. The wrong is indifferent to him until the fear of detection and punishment steals in upon him. Even then he is not sorry for his misdeed, as I have said before; he is only anxious to escape its consequences.

It seems probable that when this fear makes itself felt he is near to waking; and probably when we dream, as we often do, that the thing is only a dream, and hope for rescue from it by waking, we are always just about to wake. This double effect is very strange,

but still more strange is the effect which we are privy to in the minds of others, when they not merely say things to us which are wholly unexpected, but think things that we know they are thinking, and that they do not express in words. A great many years ago, when I was young, I dreamed that my father, who was in another town, came into the room where I was really lying asleep, and stood by my bed. He wished to greet me, after our separation, but he reasoned that if he did so, I should wake, and he turned and left the room without touching me. This process in his mind, which I knew as clearly and accurately as if it had apparently gone on in my own, was apparently confined to his mind as absolutely as anything could be that was not spoken or in any wise uttered.

Of course it was of my agency, like any other part of the dream, and it was something like the operation of the novelist's intention through the mind of his characters. But in this there is the author's consciousness that he is doing it all himself, while in my dream, this reasoning in the mind of another was something that I felt myself mere witness of. In fact there is no analogy, so far as I can make out, between the process of literary invention and the process of dreaming. In the invention, the critical faculty is

vividly and constantly alert; in dreaming, it seems altogether absent. It seems absent, too, in what we call day-dreaming, or that sort of dramatizing action which perhaps goes on perpetually in the mind, or some minds. But this day-dreaming is not otherwise any more like night-dreaming than invention is; for the man is never more actively and consciously a man, and never has a greater will to be fine and high and grand than in his day-dreams, while in his night-dreams he is quite willing to be a miscreant of any worst sort.

It is very remarkable, in view of this fact, that we have now and then, though ever so much more rarely, dreams that are as angelic as those others are demoniac. Is it possible that then the dreamer is let into his goods (the word is Swedenborg's again), instead of his evils? It may be supposed that in sleep the dreamer lies passive, while his proper soul is away, and other spirits, celestial and infernal, have free access to his mind, and abuse it to their own ends in the one case, and use it in his behalf in the other.

That would be an explanation, but nothing seems quite to hold in regard to dreams. If it is true, why should the dreamer's state so much oftener be imbued with evil than with good? It might be answered that the evil forces are much more positive and aggressive

than the good; or, that the love of the dreamer, which is his life, being mainly evil, invites the wicked spirits oftener. But that is a point which I would rather leave each dreamer to settle for himself. The greater number of every one's dreams, like the romantic novel, I fancy, concern incident rather than character, and I am not sure, after all, that the dream which convicts the dreamer of an essential baseness is commoner than the dream that tells in his favor morally.

I dare say every reader of this paper has had dreams so amusing that he has wakened himself from them by laughing, and then not found them so very funny, or perhaps not been able to recall them at all. I have had at least one of this sort, remarkable for other reasons, which remains perfect in my mind, though it is now some ten years old. One of the children had been exposed to a very remote chance of scarlet-fever at the house of a friend, and had been duly scolded for the risk, which was then quite forgotten. I dreamed that this friend, however, was giving a ladies' lunch, at which I was unaccountably and invisibly present, and the talk began to run upon the scarlet-fever cases in her family. She said that after the last she had fumigated the whole house for seventy-two hours (the period seemed very significant and impor-

tant in my dream), and had burned everything she could lay her hands on.

"And what did the nurse burn?" asked one of the other ladies.

The hostess began to laugh: "The nurse didn't burn a thing!"

Then all the rest burst out laughing at the joke, and the laughter woke me, to see the boy sitting up in his bed, and hear him saying, "Oh, I am so sick!"

It was the nausea which announces scarlet-fever, and for six weeks after that we were in quarantine. Very likely the fear of the contagion had been in my nether mind all the time, but, so far as consciousness could testify of it, I had wholly forgotten it.

VI.

One rarely loses one's personality in dreams; it is rather intensified, with all the proper circumstances and relations of it, but I have had at least one dream in which I seemed to transcend my own circumstance and condition with remarkable completeness. Even my epoch, my precious present, I left behind (or ahead, rather), and in my unity with the persons of my dream I became strictly mediæval. In fact, I have always called it my mediæval dream, to such as I could get

to listen to it; and it had for its scene a feudal tower, in some waste place; a tower open at the top, and with a deep, clear pool of water at the bottom, so that it instantly became known to me, as if I had always known it, for the Pool Tower. While I stood looking into it, in a mediæval dress and a mediæval mood, there came flying in at the open door of the ruin beside me the duke's hunchback, and after him, furious and shrieking maledictions, the swarthy beauty whom I was aware the duke was tired of. The keeping was now not only ducal, but thoroughly Italian, and it was suggested somehow to my own subtle Italian perception that the hunchback had been set on to tease the girl, and provoke her so that she would turn upon him, and try to wreak her fury on him, and chase him into the Pool Tower, and up the stone stairs that wound round its hollow to the top, where the solemn sky showed. The fearful spire of the steps was unguarded, and when I had lost the pair from sight, with the dwarf's mocking laughter and the girl's angry cries in my ears, there came fluttering from the height, like a bird wounded and whirling from a lofty tree, the figure of the girl, while far aloof the hunchback peered over at her fall. Midway in her descent her head struck against the edge of the steps, with a *kish*, such as an

egg-shell makes when broken against the edge of a platter, and then plunged into the dark pool at my feet, where I could presently see her lying in the clear depths, and the blood curling upward from the wound in her skull, like a dark smoke. I was not sensible of any great pity; I accepted the affair, quite mediævally, as something that might very well have happened, given the girl, the duke and the dwarf, and the time and place.

I am rather fond of a mediæval setting for those

"Dreams that wave before the half-shut eye,"

just closing for an afternoon nap. Then I invite to my vision a wide landscape, with a cold wintry afternoon light upon it, and over this plain I have bands and groups of people scurrying, in mediæval hose of divers colors, and mediæval leathern jerkins, hugging themselves against the frost, and very miserable. They affect me with a profound compassion; they represent to me, somehow, the vast mass of humanity, the mass that does the work, and earns the bread, and goes cold and hungry through all the ages. I should be at a loss to say why this was the effect, and I am utterly unable to say why these fore-dreams, which I partially solicit, should have such a tremendous significance as they seem to have. They are mostly of the most

evanescent and intangible character, but they have one trait in common. They always involve the attribution of ethical motive and quality to material things, and in their passage through my brain they promise me a solution of the riddle of the painful earth in the very instant when they are gone forever. They are of innumerable multitude, chasing each other with the swiftness of light, and never staying to be seized by the memory, which seems already drugged with sleep before their course begins. One of these dreams, indeed, I did capture, and I found it to be the figure 8, but lying on its side, and in that posture involving the mystery and the revelation of the mystery of the universe. I leave the reader to imagine why.

As we grow older, I think we are less and less able to remember our dreams. This is perhaps because the experience of youth is less dense, and the empty spaces of the young consciousness are more hospitable to these airy visitants. A few dreams of my later life stand out in strong relief, but for the most part they blend in an indistinguishable mass, and pass away with the actualities into a common oblivion. I should say that they were more frequent with me than they used to be; it seems to me that now I dream whole nights through, and much more about the business of

my waking life than formerly. As I earn my living by weaving a certain sort of dreams into literary form, it might be supposed that I would sometime dream of the personages in these dreams, but I cannot remember that I have ever done so. The two kinds of inventing, the voluntary and the involuntary, seem absolutely and finally distinct.

Of the prophetic dreams which people sometimes have I have mentioned the only one of mine which had any dramatic interest, but I have verified in my own experience the theory of Ribot that approaching disease sometimes intimates itself in dreams of the disorder impending, before it is otherwise declared in the organism. In actual sickness I think that I dream rather less than in health. I had a malarial fever when I was a boy, and I had a sort of continuous dream in it that distressed me greatly. It was of gliding down the school-house stairs without touching my feet to the steps, and this was indescribably appalling.

The anguish of mind that one suffers from the imaginary dangers of dreams is probably of the same quality as that inspired by real peril in waking. A curious proof of this happened within my knowledge not many years ago. One of the neighbor's children was coasting down a long hill with a railroad at the

foot of it, and as he neared the bottom an express train rushed round the curve. The flag-man ran forward and shouted to the boy to throw himself off his sled, but he kept on, and ran into the locomotive, and was so hurt that he died. His injuries, however, were to the spine, and they were of a kind that rendered him insensible to pain while he lived. He talked very clearly and calmly of his accident, and when he was asked why he did not throw himself off his sled, as the flag-man bade him, he said, "*I thought it was a dream.*" The reality had, through the mental stress, no doubt transmuted itself to the very substance of dreams, and he had felt the same kind and quality of suffering as he would have done if he had been dreaming. The Norwegian poet and novelist, Björnstjerne Björnson, was at my house shortly after this happened, and he was greatly struck by the psychological implications of the incident; it seemed to mean for him all sorts of possibilities in the obscure realm where it cast a fitful light.

But such a glimmer soon fades, and the darkness thickens round us again. It is not with the blindfold sense of sleep that we shall ever find out the secret of life, I fancy, either in the dreams which seem personal to us each one, or those universal dreams which we

apparently share with the whole race. Of the race-dream, as I may call it, there is one hardly less common than that dream of going about insufficiently clad, which I have already mentioned, and that is the dream of suddenly falling from some height, and waking with a start. The experience before the start is extremely dim, and latterly I have condensed this dread almost as much as the preliminary passages of my burglar-dream. I am aware of nothing but an instant of danger, and then comes the jar or jolt that wakens me. Upon the whole, I find this a great saving of emotion, and I do not know but there is a tendency, as I grow older, to shorten up the detail of what may be styled the conventional dream, the dream which we have so often that it is like a story read before. Indeed, the plots of dreams are not much more varied than the plots of romantic novels, which are notoriously stale and hackneyed. It would be interesting, and possibly important, if some observer would note the recurrence of this sort of dreams, and classify their varieties. I think we should all be astonished to find how few and slight the variations were.

VII.

If I eome to speak of dreams concerning the dead, it must be with a tenderness and awe that all who have had them will share with me. Nothing is more remarkable in them than the fact that the dead, though they are dead, yet live, and are, to our eommerce with them, quite like all other living persons. We may recognize, and they may recognize, that they are no longer in the body, but they are as verily living as we are. This may be merely an effeet from the doctrine of immortality which we all hold or have held, and yet I would fain believe that it may be something like proof of it. No one really knows, or ean know, but one may at least hope, without offending scienee, which indeed no longer frowns so darkly upon faith. This persistence of life in those whom we mourn as dead, may not it be a witness of the fact that the eonseiousness cannot accept the notion of death at all, and,

"Whatever crazy sorrow saith,"

that we have never truly felt them lost? Sometimes those who have died come back in dreams as parts of a common life which seems never to have been broken; the old circle is restored without a flaw; but whether they do this, or whether it is aeknowledged between

them and us that they have died, and are now disembodied spirits, the effect of life is the same. Perhaps in those dreams they and we are alike disembodied spirits, and the soul of the dreamer, which so often seems to abandon the body to the animal, is then the conscious entity, the thing which the dreamer feels to be himself, and is mingling with the souls of the departed on something like the terms which shall hereafter be constant.

I think very few of those who have lost their beloved have failed to receive some sign or message from them in dreams, and often it is of deep and abiding consolation. It may be that this is our anguish compelling the echo of love out of the darkness where nothing is, but it may be that there is something there, which answers to our throe with pity and with longing like our own. Again, no one knows, but in a matter impossible of definite solution I will not refuse the comfort which belief can give. Unbelief can be no gain, and belief no loss. But those dreams are so dear, so sacred, so interwoven with the finest and tenderest tissues of our being that one cannot speak of them freely, or indeed more than most vaguely. It is enough to say that one has had them, and to know that almost every one else has had them too. They

seem to be among the universal dreams, and a strange quality of them is, that though they deal with a fact of universal doubt, they are, to my experience at least, not nearly so fantastic or capricious as the dreams that deal with the facts of every-day life, and with the affairs of people still in this world.

I do not know whether it is common to dream of faces or figures strange to our waking knowledge, but occasionally I have done this. I suppose it is much the same kind of invention that causes the person we dream of to say or do a thing unexpected to us. But this is rather common, and the creation of a novel aspect, the physiognomy of a stranger, in the person we dream of, is rather rare. In all my dreams I can recall but one presence of the kind. I have never dreamed of any sort of monster foreign to my knowledge, or even of any grotesque thing made up of elements familiar to it; the grotesqueness has always been in the motive or circumstance of the dream. I have very seldom dreamed of animals, though once, when I was a boy, for a time after I had passed a corn-field where there were some bundles of snakes, writhen and knotted together in the cold of an early spring day, I had dreams infested by like images of these loathsome reptiles. I suppose that every one has had dreams of

finding his way through unnamable filth, and of feeding upon hideous carnage; these are clearly the punishment of gluttony, and are the fumes of a rebellious stomach.

I have heard people say they have sometimes dreamed of a thing, and awakened from their dream, and then fallen asleep and dreamed of the same thing; but I believe that this is all one continuous dream; that they did not really awaken, but only dreamed that they awakened. I have never had any such dream, but at one time I had a recurrent dream, which was so singular that I thought no one else had ever had a recurrent dream till I proved that it was rather common by starting the inquiry in the Contributors' Club in the *Atlantic Monthly*, when I found that great numbers of people have recurrent dreams. My own recurrent dreams began to come during the first year of my consulate at Venice, where I had hoped to find the same kind of poetic dimness on the phases of American life, which I wished to treat in literature, as the distance in time would have given. I should not wish any such dimness now; but those were my romantic days, and I was sorely baffled by its absence. The disappointment began to haunt my nights as well as my days, and a dream repeated itself from week to

week for a matter of eight or ten months to one effect. I dreamed that I had gone home to America, and that people met me and said, "Why, you have given up your place!" and I always answered: "Certainly not; I haven't done at all what I mean to do there, yet. I am only here on my ten days' leave." I meant the ten days which a consul might take each quarter without applying to the Department of State; and then I would reflect how impossible it was that I should make the visit in that time. I saw that I should be found out, and dismissed from my office and publicly disgraced. Then, suddenly, I was not consul at Venice, and had not been, but consul at Delhi in India; and the distress I felt would all end in a splendid Oriental phantasmagory of elephants and native princes, with their retinues in procession, which I suppose was mostly out of my reading of De Quincey. This dream, with no variation that I can recall, persisted till I broke it up by saying, in the morning after it had recurred, that I had dreamed that dream again; and so it began to fade away, coming less and less frequently, and at last ceasing altogether.

I am rather proud of that dream; it is really my battle-horse among dreams, and I think I will ride away on it.

AN EAST-SIDE RAMBLE

The New Yorkers, following the custom of Europe, often fence themselves about with a great deal of ceremony in social matters, even such small social matters as making calls.

Some ladies have days when they receive calls; others have no specified day, and then you take your chance of being turned from the door without seeing them, or if you find them, of finding them reluctant and preoccupied. A friend of mine says he has often felt as if he had been admitted through the error of the man or the maid who opened the door to him at such houses, and who returned, after carrying up his name, to say, with a frightened air, that the lady would be down in a moment.

But when there are days there is never any misgiving about letting you in. The door is whisked open before you have had time to ring, sometimes by a servant who has the effect of not belonging to the house,

but hired for the afternoon. Then you leave your eard on a platter of some sort in the hall to attest the fact of your visit, and at the simpler houses find your way into the drawing-room unannouneed, though the English eustom of shouting your name before you is very eommon and is always observed where there is any pretense to fashion. Certain ladies reeeive onee a week throughout the season; others reeeive on some day each week of Deeember or January or February, as the ease may be. When there is this limit to a month, the reeeption insensibly takes on the eharaeter of an afternoon tea, and, in fact, it varies from that only in being a little less erowded. There is tea or ehoeolate or mild puneh and a table spread with pastries and sweets, whieh hardly any oue touehes. A young lady dedieates herself to the serviee of each urn and offers you the beverage that flows from it. There is a great air of gayety, a very exeited ehatter of female voiees, a eonstant flutter of greeting and leave-taking and a general sense of amiable emptiness and bewildered kindness when you eome away. The genius of these little affairs is supposed to be informality, but at some houses where you enjoy such informalities you find two men in livery on the steps outside, a third opens the door for you, a fourth takes your hat

and stick, a fifth receives your overcoat and a sixth catches at your name and miscalls it into the drawing room.

I.

But I must not give too exclusive an impression of ceremony in the New-Yorkers. I made some calls about Christmas-time last year in a quarter of the city where the informalities are real and where the hospitalities, such as they were, I thought as sincere as in the houses where the informalities are more apparent. The sort of calls I made were rather fashionable some years ago, but are so no longer. It was a fad to make them, and the fad, like all really nice fads, came from England, and perhaps it has now died out here because it has died out there. At any rate, it seems certain that there is now less interest, less curiosity, concerning the home life of the poor than there was then among the comfortable people. I do not say there is less sympathy—there must be still a good deal of sympathy—but I should say there was less hope with the well-to-do of bettering the condition of the ill-to-do; some philosophers even warn us against indulging a feeling of commiseration, lest it should encourage the poor to attempt themselves to better their condition.

I

Yet there are no signs of rebellion on the part of the poor, whom I found as tame and peaceful, apparently, when I went the rounds of their unceremonious at-homes as the most anxious philosopher could desire. My calls were by no means of the nature of a perquisition, but they left very little unknown to me, I fancy, of the way the poor live, so frank and simple is their life. They included some tenements of the American quarter, near the point of the island, on the West Side, and a rather greater number on the East Side, in the heart of the district abandoned chiefly to the Russian Jews, though there are no doubt other nationalities to be found there. It is said to be more densely populated than any other area in the world, or at least in Christendom, for within a square mile there are more than three hundred and fifty thousand men, women and children. One can imagine from this fact alone how they are housed and what their chances of the comforts and decencies of life may be. But I must not hurry to the region of these homes before I have first tried to show the interiors of that quarter called American, where I found the Americans represented, as they are so often, by Irish people. The friend who went with me on my calls led me across the usual surface tracks, under the usual elevated tracks, and

suddenly dodged before me into an alleyway about two feet wide. This crept under houses fronting on the squalid street we had left and gave into a sort of court some ten or twelve feet wide by thirty or forty feet long. The buildings surrounding it were low and very old. One of them was a stable, which contributed its stench to the odors that rose from the reeking pavement and from the closets filling an end of the court, with a corner left beside them for the hydrant that supplied the water of the whole inclosure. It is from this court that the inmates of the tenements have their sole chance of sun and air. What the place must be in summer I had not the heart to think, and on the wintry day of my visit I could not feel the fury of the skies which my guide said would have been evident to me if I had seen it in August. I could better fancy this when I climbed the rickety stairs within one of the houses and found myself in a typical New York tenement. Then I almost choked at the thought of what a hot day, what a hot night, must be in such a place, with the two small windows inhaling the putrid breath of the court and transmitting it, twice fouled by the passage through the living-room, to the black hole in the rear, where the whole family lay on the heap of rags that passed for a bed.

We had our choice which door to knock at on the narrow landing, a yard wide at most, which opened into such tenements to the right and left, as many stories up as the stairs mounted. We stood at once in the presence of the hostess; there was no ceremony of sending in our cards here, or having our names called to her. In one case we found her over the washtub, with her three weeks' babe bundled in a chair beside it. A table, with a half-eaten loaf, that formed her breakfast, on it, helped, with the cooking-stove, to crowd the place past any possibility of sitting down, if there had been chairs to sit in; so we stood, as people do at an afternoon tea. At sight of us the woman began to cry and complain that her man had been drunk and idle for a month and did nothing for her; though in these times he might have been sober and idle and done as little. Some good soul was paying the rent for her, which was half as great as would have hired a decent flat in a good part of the town; but how her food came or the coal for her stove remained a mystery which we did not try to solve. She wiped her tears at the exhibition of a small coin, which she had perhaps dimly foreseen through them from the moment they began to flow. It was wrong, perhaps, to give her money, but it was not very wrong,

perhaps, for the money was not very much, and if it pauperized her it could not have been said that she was wholly unpauperized before she took it. These are very difficult cases, but all life is a hopeless tangle, and the right is something that does not show itself at once, especially in economical affairs.

In another tenement we found a family as gay and hopeful as this was dismal and desperate. An Irish lady with a stylish fringe of red hair decorating her forehead, welcomed us with excuses for the state of the apartment, which in the next breath she proved herself very proud of, for she said that if people were not comfortable in their houses it was because they were slovenly and untidy. I could not see that she was neater than her neighbor on the landing below. She had a florid taste in pictures, and half a dozen large colored prints went far to hide the walls, which, she said, the landlord had lately had whitewashed, though to eyes less fond than hers they showed a livid blue. The whitewashing was the sole repairs which had been put upon her tenement since she came into it, but she seemed to think it quite enough; and her man, who sat at leisure near the stove, in the three days' beard which seems inseparable from idle poverty, was quite boastful of its advantages. He said that he had lived

in that court for thirty years and there was no such air anywhere else in this world. I could readily believe him, being there to smell it and coming away with the taste of it in my mouth. Like other necessaries of life, it must have been rather scanty in that happy home, especially at night, when the dark fell outside and a double dark thickened in the small bin which stood open to our gaze at the end of the room. The whitewash seemed not to have penetrated to this lair, where a frowzy mattress showed itself on a rickety bedstead. The beds in these sleeping-holes were never made up; they were rounded into a heap and seemed commonly of a coarse brown sacking. They had always a horrible fascination for me. I fancied them astir with a certain life which, if there had been a consensus of it to that effect, might have walked off with them.

All the tenements here were of this size and shape —a room with windows opening upon the court and at the rear the small black bin or pen for the bed. The room was perhaps twelve feet square and the bin was six, and for such a dwelling the tenant pays six dollars a month. If he fails to pay it he is evicted, and some thirty thousand evictions have taken place in the past year. But an eviction is by no means the dreadful

hardship the reader would perhaps imagine it. To be sure, it means putting the tenant on the sidewalk with his poor household gear in any weather and at any hour; but if it is very cold or very wet weather, the evicted family is seldom suffered to pass the night there. The wretched neighbors gather about and take them in, and their life begins again on the old terms; or the charities come to their aid, and they are dispersed into the different refuges until the father or mother can find another hole for them to crawl into. Still, natural as it all is, I should think it must surprise an Irishman, who supposed he had left eviction behind him in his native land, to find it so rife in the country of his adoption.

II.

My friend asked me if I would like to go into any other tenements, but I thought that if what I had seen was typical, I had seen enough in that quarter. The truth is, I had not yet accustomed myself to going in upon people in that way, though they seemed accustomed to being gone in upon without any ceremony but the robust "Good-morning!" my companion gave them by way of accounting for our presence, and I wanted a little interval to prepare myself for further forays. The people seemed quite ready to be ques-

tioned, and answered us as persons in authority. They may have taken us for detectives, or agents of benevolent societies, or journalists in search of copy. In any case, they had nothing to lose and they might have something to gain; so they received us kindly and made us as much at home among them as they knew how. It may have been that in some instances they supposed that we were members of the Board of Health and were their natural allies against their landlords.

I had not realized before how much this noble institution can befriend the poor, so potently sustained as it is in the discharge of its duties by the popular sentiment in a land where popular sentiment is so often so weak. It has full power, in the public interest, to order repairs and betterments necessary for the general health in any domicile, rich or poor, in the city, and no man's pleasure or profit may hinder it. In cases of contagion or infection, it may isolate the neighborhood or vacate the premises, or, in certain desperate conditions, destroy them. As there are always pestilences of some sort preying upon the poor (as if their poverty were not enough), my companion could point out a typhus quarter, which the Board had shut up and which we must not approach. Such

minor plagues as smallpox, scarlet-fever, and diphtheria are quickly discovered and made known, and the places that they have infested are closed till they can be thoroughly purified. Any tenant believing his premises to be in an unwholesome or dangerous state may call in the Board, and from its decision the landlord has no appeal. He must make the changes the Board ordains, and he must make them at his own cost, though no doubt, when the tenant can pay, he contrives somehow to make him pay in the end. The landlord, especially if he battens on the poorer sort of tenants, is always in fear of the Board, and the tenant is in love with it, for he knows that, in a community otherwise delivered over to the pursuit of pelf or pleasure, it stands his ready friend, whose mandate private interest obeys as it obeys no other. It seems to have more honor than any other institution among us, and, amid the most frightful corruption of every kind, to remain incorruptible. Very likely the landlord may sometimes think that it abuses its power, but the tenant never thinks so, and the public seems always to agree with the tenant. The press, which is so keen to scent out paternalism in municipal or national affairs, has not yet perceived any odor of it in the Board of Health, and stands its constant friend,

though it embodies in the most destinctive form the principle that, in a civilized community, the collective interest is supreme. Even if such an extension of its powers were not in the order of evolution, it would not be so illogical for the Board of Health to command the abatement of poverty when the diseases that flow from poverty cannot be otherwise abated. I should not like to prophesy that it will ever do so, but stranger things have happened through the necessity that knows no law, not even the law of demand and supply—the demand of Moloch and the supply of Misery.

III.

I do not know whether the Hebrew quarter, when I began to make my calls there, seemed any worse than the American quarter or not. But I noticed presently a curious subjective effect in myself, which I offer for the reader's speculation.

There is something in a very little experience of such places that blunts the perception, so that they do not seem so dreadful as they are; and I should feel as if I were exaggerating if I recorded my first impression of their loathsomeness. I soon came to look upon the conditions as normal, not for me, indeed, or for the kind of people I mostly consort with, but for

the inmates of the dens and lairs about me. Perhaps this was partly their fault; they were uncomplaining, if not patient, in circumstances where I believe a single week's sojourn, with no more hope of a better lot than they could have, would make anarchists of the best people in the city. Perhaps the poor people themselves are not so thoroughly persuaded that there is anything very unjust in their fate, as the compassionate think. They at least do not know the better fortune of others, and they have the habit of passively enduring their own. I found them usually cheerful in the Hebrew quarter, and they had so much courage as enabled them to keep themselves noticeably clean in an environment where I am afraid their betters would scarcely have had heart to wash their faces and comb their hair. There was even a decent tidiness in their dress, which I did not find very ragged, though it often seemed unseasonable and insufficient. But here again, as in many other phases of life, I was struck by men's heroic superiority to their fate, if their fate is hard; and I felt anew that if prosperous and comfortable people were as good in proportion to their fortune as these people were they would be as the angels of light, which, I am afraid they now but faintly resemble.

One of the places we visited was a court somewhat like that we had already seen in the American quarter, but rather smaller and with more the effect of a pit, since the walls around it were so much higher. There was the same row of closets at one side and the hydrant next them, but here the hydrant was bound up in rags to keep it from freezing, apparently, and the wretched place was by no means so foul under foot. To be sure, there was no stable to contribute its filth, but we learned that a suitable stench was not wanting from a bakery in one of the basements, which a man in good clothes and a large watch-chain told us rose from it in suffocating fumes at a certain hour, when the baker was doing some unimaginable thing to the bread. This man seemed to be the employer of labor in one of the rooms above, and he said that when the smell began they could hardly breathe. He caught promptly at the notion of the Board of Health, and I dare say that the baker will be duly abated. None of the other people complained, but that was perhaps because they had only their Yiddish to complain in, and knew that it would be wasted on us. They seemed neither curious nor suspicious concerning us; they let us go everywhere, as if they had no thought of hindering us. One of the tenements we entered

had just been vacated; but there was a little girl of ten there, with some much smaller children, amusing them in the empty space. Through a public-spirited boy, who had taken charge of us from the beginning and had a justly humorous sense of the situation, we learned that this little maid was not the sister but the servant of the others, for even in these low levels society makes its distinctions. I dare say that the servant was not suffered to eat with the others when they had anything to eat, and that when they had nothing her inferiority was somehow brought home to her. She may have been made to wait and famish after the others had hungered some time. She was a cheerful and friendly creature and her small brood were kept tidy like herself.

The basement under this vacant tenement we found inhabited, and though it was a most preposterous place for people to live, it was not as dirty as one would think. To be sure, it was not very light and all the dirt may not have been visible. One of the smiling women who were there made their excuses, "Poor people; cannot keep very nice," and laughed as if she had said a good thing. There was nothing in the room but a table and a few chairs and a stove, without fire, but they were all contentedly there together

in the dark, which hardly let them see one another's faces. My companion struck a match and held it to the cavernous mouth of an inner cellar half as large as the room we were in, where it winked and paled so soon that I had only a glimpse of the bed, with the rounded heap of bedding on it; but out of this hole, as if she had been a rat, scared from it by the light, a young girl came, rubbing her eyes and vaguely smiling, and vanished up-stairs somewhere.

IV.

I found no shape or size of tenement but this. There was always the one room, where the inmates lived by day, and the one den, where they slept by night, apparently all in the same bed, though probably the children were strewn about the floor. If the tenement were high up the living-room had more light and air than if it were low down; but the sleeping-hole never had any light or air of its own. My calls were made on one of the mild days which fell before last Christmas, and so I suppose I saw these places at their best; but what they must be when the summer is seven times heated without, as it often is in New York, or when the arctic cold has pierced these hapless abodes and the inmates huddle together for their

animal heat, the reader must imagine for himself. The Irish-Americans had flaming stoves, even on that soft day, but in the Hebrew tenements I found no fire. They were doubtless the better for this, and it is one of the comical anomalies of the whole affair that they are singularly healthy. The death rate among them is one of the lowest in the city, though whether for their final advantage it might not better be the highest, is one of the things one must not ask one's self. In their presence I should not dare to ask it, even in my deepest thought. They are then so like other human beings and really so little different from the best, except in their environment, that I had to get away from this before I could regard them as wild beasts.

I suppose there are and have been worse conditions of life, but if I stopped short of savage life I found it hard to imagine them. I did not exaggerate to myself the squalor that I saw, and I do not exaggerate it to the reader. As I have said, I was so far from sentimentalizing it that I almost immediately reconciled myself to it, as far as its victims were concerned. Still, it was squalor of a kind which, it seemed to me, it could not be possible to outrival anywhere in the life one commonly calls civilized. It is true that the Ind-

ians who formerly inhabited this island were no more comfortably lodged in their wigwams of bark and skins than these poor New-Yorkers in their tenements. But the wild men pay no rent, and if they are crowded together upon terms that equally forbid decency and comfort in their shelter, they have the freedom of the forest and the prairie about them; they have the illimitable sky and the whole light of day and the four winds to breathe when they issue into the open air. The New York tenement dwellers, even when they leave their lairs, are still pent in their high-walled streets, and inhale a thousand stenches of their own and others' making. The street, except in snow and rain, is always better than their horrible houses, and it is doubtless because they pass so much of their time in the street that the death rate is so low among them. Perhaps their domiciles can be best likened for darkness and discomfort to the dugouts or sod huts of the settlers on the great plains. But these are only temporary shelters, while the tenement dwellers have no hope of better housing; they have neither the prospect of a happier fortune through their own energy as the settlers have, nor any chance from the humane efforts and teachings of missionaries, like the savages. With the tenement dwellers it is from generation to genera-

tion, if not for the individual, then for the class, since no one expects that there will not always be tenement dwellers in New York as long as our present economical conditions endure.

V.

When I first set out on my calls I provided myself with some small silver, which I thought I might fitly give, at least to the children, and in some of the first places I did this. But presently I began to fancy an unseemliness in it, as if it were an indignity added to the hardship of their lot, and to feel that unless I gave all my worldly wealth to them I was in a manner mocking their misery. I could not give everything, for then I should have had to come upon charity myself, and so I mostly kept my little coins in my pocket; but when we mounted into the court again from that cellar apartment and found an old, old woman there, wrinkled and yellow, with twinkling eyes and a toothless smile, waiting to see us, as if she were as curious in her way as we were in ours, I was tempted. She said in her Yiddish, which the humorous boy interpreted, that she was eighty years old, and she looked a hundred, while she babbled unintelligibly but very cheerfully on. I gave her a piece of twenty-five cents

and she burst into a blessing, that I should not have thought could be bought for money. We did not stay to hear it out, but the boy did, and he followed to report it to me, with a gleeful interest in its beneficent exaggerations. If it is fulfilled I shall live to be a man of many and prosperous years, and I shall die possessed of wealth that will endow a great many colleges and found a score of libraries. I do not know whether the boy envied me or not, but I wish I could have left that benediction to him, for I took a great liking to him, his shrewd smile, his gay eyes, his promise of a Hebrew nose, and his whole wise little visage. He said that he went to school and studied reading, writing, geography and everything. All the children we spoke to said that they went to school, and they were quick and intelligent. They could mostly speak English, while most of their elders knew only Yiddish.

The sound of this was around us on the street we issued into, and which seemed from end to end a vast bazaar, where there was a great deal of selling, whether there was much buying or not. The place is humorously called the pig-market by the Christians, because everything in the world but pork is to be found there. To me its activity was a sorrowfully amusing satire upon the business ideal of our plutocratic civilization.

These people were desperately poor, yet they preyed upon one another in their commerce, as if they could be enriched by selling dear or buying cheap. So far as I could see they would only impoverish each other more and more, but they trafficked as eagerly as if there were wealth in every bargain. The sidewalks and the roadways were thronged with peddlers and purchasers, and everywhere I saw splendid types of that old Hebrew world which had the sense if not the knowledge of God when all the rest of us lay sunk in heathen darkness. There were women with oval faces and olive tints, and clear, dark eyes, relucent as evening pools, and men with long beards of jetty black or silvery white, and the noble profiles of their race. I said to myself that it was among such throngs that Christ walked, it was from such people that he chose his Disciples and his friends; but I looked in vain for him in Hester street. Probably he was at that moment in Fifth Avenue.

VI.

After all, I was loath to come away. I should have liked to stay and live awhile with such as they, if the terms of their life had been possible, for there were phases of it that were very attractive. That constant

meeting and that neighborly intimacy were superficially at least of a very pleasant effect, and though the whole place seemed abandoned to mere trade, it may have been a necessity of the case, for I am told that many of these Hebrews have another ideal, and think and vote in the hope that the land of their refuge shall yet some day keep its word to the world, so that men shall be equally free in it to the pursuit of happiness. I suppose they are mostly fugitives from the Russian persecution, and that from the cradle their days must have been full of fear and care, and from the time they could toil that they must have toiled at whatever their hands found to do. Yet they had not the look of a degraded people; they were quiet and orderly, and I saw none of the drunkenness or the truculence of an Irish or low American neighborhood among them. There were no policemen in sight, and the quiet behavior that struck me so much seemed not to have been enforced. Very likely they may have moods different from that I saw, but I only tell of what I saw, and I am by no means ready yet to preach poverty as a saving grace. Though they seemed so patient and even cheerful in some cases, I do not think it is well for human beings to live whole families together in one room with a kennel out of it, where modesty may sur-

vive, but decency is impossible. Neither do I think they can be the better men and women for being insufficiently clothed and fed, though so many of us appear none the better for being housed in palaces and clad in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day.

I have tried to report simply and honestly what I saw of the life of our poorest people that day. One might say it was not so bad as it is painted, but I think it is quite as bad as it appeared; and I could not see that in itself or in its conditions it held the promise or the hope of anything better. If it is tolerable, it must endure; if it is intolerable, still it must endure. Here and there one will release himself from it, and doubtless numbers are alway doing this, as in the days of slavery there were always fugitives; but for the great mass the captivity remains. Upon the present terms of leaving the poor to be housed by private landlords, whose interest it is to get the greatest return of money for the money invested, the very poorest must always be housed as they are now. Nothing but public control in some form or other can secure them a shelter fit for human beings.

TRIBULATIONS OF A CHEERFUL GIVER.

Some months ago, as I was passing through a down-town street on my way to the elevated station, I saw a man sitting on the steps of a house. He seemed to be resting his elbows on his knees, and holding out both his hands. As I came nearer I perceived that he had no hands, but only stumps, where the fingers had been cut off close to the palms, and that it was these stumps he was holding out in the mute appeal which was his form of begging. Otherwise he did not ask charity. When I approached him he did not look up, and when I stopped in front of him he did not speak. I thought this rather fine, in its way; except for his mutilation, which the man really could not help, there was nothing to offend the taste; and his immobile silence was certainly impressive.

I decided at once to give him something; for when I am in the presence of want, or even the appearance of want, there is something that says to me, "Give to

him that asketh," and I have to give, or else go away with a bad conscience—a thing I hate. Of course I do not give much, for I wish to be a good citizen as well as a good Christian; and as soon as I obey that voice which I cannot disobey, I hear another voice reproaching me for encouraging street beggary. I have been taught that street beggary is wrong, and when I have to unbutton two coats and go through three or four pockets before I can reach the small coin I mean to give in compliance with that imperative voice, I certainly feel it to be wrong. So I compromise, and I am never able to make sure that either of those voices is satisfied with me. I am not even satisfied with myself; but I am better satisfied than if I gave nothing. That was the selfish reason I now had for deciding to yield to my better nature, and to obey the voice which bade me "Give to him that asketh"; for, as I said, I hate a bad conscience, and of two bad consciences I always choose the least, which in a case like this, is the one that incensed political economy gives me.

I.

I put my hand into my hip-pocket, where I keep my silver, and found nothing there but half a dollar. This at once changed the whole current of my feel-

ings; and it was not chill penury that repressed my noble rage, but chill affluence. It was manifestly wrong to give half a dollar to a man who had no hands, or to any sort of beggar. I was willing to commit a small act of incivism, but I had not the courage to flout political economy to the extent of fifty cents; and I felt that when I was bidden "Give to him that asketh," I was never meant to give so much as a half-dollar, but a cent, or a half-dime, or at the most a quarter. I wished I had a quarter. I would gladly have given a quarter, but there was nothing in my pocket but that fatal, that inexorably indivisible half-dollar, the continent of two quarters, but not practically a quarter. I would have asked anybody in sight to change it for me, but there was no one passing; it was a quiet street of brown-stone dwellings, and not a thronged thoroughfare at any time. At that hour of the late afternoon it was deserted, except for the beggar and myself; and I am not sure that he had any business to be sitting there, on the steps of another man's house, or that I had the right to encourage his invasion by giving him anything. For a moment I did not know quite what to do. To be sure, I was not bound to the man in any way. He had not asked me for charity, and I had barely paused before him; I could go on and ignore

the incident. I thought of doing this, but then I thought of the bad conscience I should be certain to have, and I could not go on. I glanced across the street, and near the corner I saw a decent-looking restaurant; and "Wait a minute," I said to the man, as if he were likely to go away, and I ran across to get my half-dollar changed at the restaurant.

I was now quite resolved to give him a quarter, and be done with it; the thing was getting to be a bore. But when I entered the restaurant I saw no one there but a young man quite at the end of a long room; and when he had come all the way forward to find what I wanted, I was ashamed to ask him to change my half-dollar, and I pretended that I wanted a package of Sweet Caporal cigarettes, which I did not want, and which it was a pure waste for me to buy, since I do not smoke, though doubtless it was better to buy them and encourage commerce than to give the half-dollar and encourage beggary. At any rate, I instinctively felt that I had political economy on my side in the transaction, and I made haste to go back to the man on the steps, and secure myself with Christian charity too. On the way over to him, however, I decided that I would not give him a quarter, and I ended by poising fifteen cents on one of his outstretched stumps.

He seemed very grateful, and thanked me earnestly, with a little note of surprise in his voice, as if he were not used to such splendid charity as that; and in fact, I suppose very few people gave so handsomely to him. He spoke with a German accent; and when I asked him how he had lost his hands, he answered, "Frost. Frozen off, here in the city." I could not go on and ask him for further particulars, for I thought it but too likely that he had been drunk when exposed to weather that would freeze one's hands off, and that he was now paying the penalty of his debauchery. I was in no wise so much at peace with myself as I had expected to be; and I was still less so when a young girl halted as she came by, and, seeing what I had done, and hearing what the man said, put a dime on the other stump. She looked poor herself; her sack was quite shabby about the seams. I did not think she could afford to give so much to a single beggar, and I was aware of having tempted her to the excess by my own profusion. If she had seen me giving the man only a nickel, she would perhaps have given him a cent, which was probably all she could afford.

II.

I came away feeling indescribably squalid. I perceived now that I could have taken my stand upon the high ground of discouraging street beggary, and given nothing; but having once lowered myself to the level of the early Christians, I ought to have given the half-dollar. It did not console me to remember the surprise in the man's gratitude, and to reflect that I had probably given him at least three times as much as he usually got from the tenderest-hearted people. I perceived that I had been the divinely appointed bearer of half a dollar to his mutilation and his misery, and I had given him fifteen cents out of it, and wasted ten, and kept the other twenty-five; in other words, I had embezzled the greater part of the money intrusted to me for him.

When I got home and told them at dinner just what I had done, they all agreed that I had done a mighty shabby thing. I do not know whether the reader will agree with them or not—perhaps I would rather not know; and on the other hand, I shall not ask him what he would have done in the like case. Now that it is laid before him in all its shameless nakedness, I dare say he will pretend that he would have given the half-dollar. But I doubt if he would; and there is a curi-

ous prineiple governing this whole matter of giving, whieh I would like him to eonsider with me. Charity is a very simple thing when you look at it from the standpoint of the good Christian, but it is very eomplex when you look at it from the standpoint of the good eitizen; and there seems to be an instinetive effort on our part to reeoneile two duties by a eertain proportion whieh we observe in giving. Whether we say so to ourselves or not, we behave as if it would be the wildest folly to give at all in the measure Christ bade; and by an apt psyehologieal juggle we adjust our sueeor to the various degrees of need that present themselves. To the absolutely destitute it is plain that anything will be better than nothing, and so we give the smallest eharity to those who need eharity most. I dare say people will deny this, but it is true, all the same, as the reader will allow when he thinks about it. We aet upon a kind of logie in the matter, though I do not suppose many aet eonseiously upon it. Here is a man whispering to you in the dark that he has not had anything to eat all day, and does not know where to sleep. Shall you give him a dollar to get a good supper and a deeent lodging? Certainly not: you shall give him a dime, and trust that some one else will give him another; or if you have some eharity

tickets about you, then you give him one of them, and go away feeling that you have at once befriended and outwitted him; for the supposition is that he is a fraud, and has been trying to work you.

This is not a question which affects the excellence of the charities system. I know how good and kind and just that is; but it is a question that affects the whole Christian philosophy of giving. A friend, whom I was talking the matter over with, was inclined to doubt whether Christ's doctrine was applicable, in its sweeping simplicity, to our complex modern conditions; whether it was final, whether it was the last word, as we say. Of course it does seem a little absurd to give to him that asketh, when you do not know what he is going to do with the money, and when you do not know whether he has not come to want by his own fault, or whether he is really in want.

III.

I must say that his statement of his own case is usually incoherent. The poor fellows have very little imagination or invention; they might almost as well be realistic novelists. I find that those who strike me for a night's lodging, when they stop me in the street at night, come as a rule from Pittsburg, and are iron-

workers of some sort; the last one said he was a puddler, "A skilled mechanic," he explained—"what is called a skilled mechanic"; and of course he was only watching for some chance to get back to Pittsburg, though there was no chance of work, from what he told me, after he got there. On the other hand, I find that most of those who ask by day for money to get a dinner are from Philadelphia, or the rural parts of eastern Pennsylvania, though within six months I have extended hospitality (I think that is the right phrase) to two architectural draftsmen from Boston. They were both entirely decent-looking, sober-looking young men, who spoke like men of education, and they each gratefully accepted a quarter from me. I do not attempt to account for them, for they made no attempt to account for themselves; and I think the effect was more artistic so.

I am rarely approached by any professed New-Yorker, which is perhaps a proof of the superior industry or prosperity of our city; but now and then a fellow-citizen who has fallen out asks me for money in the street, and perhaps goes straight and spends it for drink. Drink, however, is as necessary in some forms as food itself, and a rich, generous port wine is often prescribed for invalids. These men, without exception,

look like invalids, and I dare say that they would prefer to buy a rich, generous port wine if I gave them money enough. I never do that, though I have a means of making my alms seem greater, to myself at least, by practising a little cordiality with the poor fellows. I do not give grudgingly or silently, but I say, if I give at all, when they ask me, "Why, of course!" or "Yes, certainly"; and sometimes I invite them to use their feeble powers of invention in my behalf, and tell how they wish me to think they have come to the sad pass of beggary. This seems to flatter them, and it makes me feel much better, which is really my motive for doing it.

Now and then they will offer me some apology for begging, in a tone that says, "I know how it is myself"; and once there was one who began by saying, "I know it's a shame for a strong man like me to be begging, but—" They seldom have any devices for working me, beyond the simple statement of their destitution; though there was a case in which I helped a poor fellow raise a quarter upon a postal order, which he then kept as a pledge of my good faith. Their main reliance seems to be lead-pencils, which they have in all inferior variety. I find that they will take it kindly if you do not want any change back when

you have given them a coin worth more than they asked for the pencil, and that they will even let you off without taking the pencil after you have bought it. In the end you have to use some means to save yourself from the accumulation of pencils, unless you are willing to burn them for kindling-wood; and I find the simplest way is not to take them after you have paid for them. It is amusing how quickly you can establish a comity with these pencil people; they will not only let you leave your pencils with them, but they will sometimes excuse you from buying if you remind them that you have bought of them lately. Then, if they do not remember you, they at least smile politely and pretend to do so.

IV.

Ought one to give money to a hand-organist, who is manifestly making himself a nuisance before the door of some one else? I have asked myself this when I have been tempted, and I am not yet quite clear about it. At present, therefore, I give only to the inaudible street minstrels, who earn an honest living, and make no noise about it. I cannot think that a ballad-singer on Sixth Avenue, who pours forth his artless lay amid the roar and rattle of the elevated trains, the jangle and clatter of the horse-cars, the

bang of the grocers' carts, and the thunder of the express-wagons, is practically molesting anybody; and I believe that one can reward his innocent efforts without wronging his neighbors. It is always amusing to have him stop in his most effective phrase to say, "Thank you, thank you, sir," and then go on again. The other day, as I dropped my contribution into the extended hat, I asked, "How is business?" and the singer interrupted himself to answer, "Nothing-to-brag-of-sir-thank-you," and resumed with continuous tenderness the "ditty of no tone" that he was piping to the inattentive uproar of the street.

It may be doubted whether a balladist who is not making himself heard is earning his money; but, on the other hand, it may be asked if he is not less regrettable for that reason. A great many good people do not earn their money, and yet by universal consent they seem to have a right to it. We cannot oblige the poor to earn their money, any more than the rich, without attacking the principle on which society is based, and classing ourselves with its enemies. If people get money out of other people, we ought not to ask how they get it, whether it is much or little; and I, at any rate, will not scan too closely the honesty of the inaudible balladist of the avenue. Neither will

I question the gains of those silentious minstrels who grind small, mute organs at the corners of the pavement, with a little tin cup beside them to receive tribute. They are usually old, old women, and I suppose Italians; but they seem not to be very distinctively anything. How they can sit upon the cold stone all day long without taking their deaths, passes me to say; and I am inclined to think that they do really earn their money, if not as minstrels, then as monuments of human endurance. The average American grandmother would sneeze in five seconds, under the same conditions, and be laid up for the rest of the winter. But these hardy aliens remain unaffected by cold or wet, light or dark. One night I came upon one sleeping on her curbstone,—such a small, dull wad of outworn womanhood!—her gray old head bent upon her knees, and her withered arms wound in her thin shawl. It was very chill that night, with a sharp wind sweeping the street that the Street Department had neglected; but this poor old thing slept on, while I stood by her trying to imagine her short and simple annals; a dim, far-off childhood in some peasant hut, a girlhood with its tender dreams, a motherhood with its cares, a grandmotherhood with its pains—the whole round of woman's life, with want through all, wound into this

last result of houseless age at my feet. How much of human life comes to no more—if, indeed, one ought not to say how little comes to so much! I sighed, as people of feeling used to do in the eighteenth century, and dropped a dime into the tin cup. The sound startled the beldame, and I hope that before she woke and looked up at me she had time to dream riches and luxury for the rest of her life. "*Bella musica!*" I said, with a fine irony, and she smiled and shrugged, and began to feel for the handle of her organ, as if she were willing to begin giving me my money's worth on the spot. If we did not see such sights every day how impossible they would seem!

V.

The whole spectacle of poverty, indeed, is incredible. As soon as you cease to have it before your eyes,—even when you have it before your eyes,—you can hardly believe it, and that is perhaps why so many people deny that it exists, or is much more than a superstition of the sentimentalist. When I get back into my own comfortable room, among my papers and books, I remember it as I remember something at the theatre. It seems to be turned off, as Niagara does, when you come away. The difficulty here in New

York is that the moment you go out again, you find it turned on, full tide. I used to live in a country supposed to be peculiarly infested by beggars; but I believe I was not so much asked for charity in Venice as I am in New York. There are as many beggars on our streets as in Venice, and as for the organized efforts to get at one's compassion, there is no parallel for New York anywhere. The letters asking aid for air funds, salt and fresh, for homes and shelters, for reading-rooms and eating-rooms, for hospitals and refuges, for the lame, halt, and blind, for the old, for the young, for the anhungered and ashamed, of all imaginable descriptions, storm in with every mail, so that one hates to open one's letters nowadays; for instead of finding a pleasant line from a friend, one finds an appeal, in print imitating typewriting, from several of the millionaires in the city for aid of some good object to which they have lent the influence of their signatures, and inclosing an envelope, directed but not stamped, for your subscription. You do not escape from the proof of poverty even by keeping indoors amidst your own luxurious environment; besides, your digestion becomes impaired, and you have to go out, if you are to have any appetite for your dinner; and then the trouble begins on other terms.

One of my minor difficulties, if I may keep on confessing myself to the reader, is a very small pattern of newsboys, whom I am tempted to make keep the change when I get a one-cent paper of them and give them a five-cent piece. I see men, well dressed, well brushed, with the air of being exemplary citizens, fathers of families, and pillars of churches, wait patiently or impatiently, while these little fellows search one pocket and another for the pennies due, or run to some comrade Chonnie or Chimmie for them; and I cannot help feeling that I may be doing something very disorganizing or demoralizing in failing to demand my change. At first I used to pass on without apparently noticing that I had given too much, but I perceived that then these small wretches sometimes winked to their friends, in the belief that they had cheated me; and now I let them offer to get the change before I let them keep it. I may be undermining society, and teaching them to trust in a fickle fortune rather than their own enterprise, by overpaying them; but at least I will not corrupt them by letting them think they have taken advantage of my ignorance. If the reader will not whisper it again, I will own that I have sometimes paid as high as ten cents for a one-cent paper, which I did not want, when it has been

offered me by a very minute newsboy near midnight; and I have done this in conscious defiance of the well-known fact that it is a ruse of very minute newsboys to be out late when they ought to be in bed at home, or at *the* Home (which seems different), in order to work the sympathies of unwary philanthropists. The statistics in regard to these miscreants are as unquestionable as those relating to street beggars who have amassed fortunes and died amidst rags and riches of dramatic character. I am sorry that I cannot say where the statistics are to be found.

VI.

The actual practice of fraud, even when you discover it, must give you interesting question, unless you are cock-sure of your sociology. I was once met by a little girl on a cross-street in a respectable quarter of the town, who burst into tears at sight of me, and asked for money to buy her sick mother bread. The very next day I was passing through the same street, and I saw the same little girl burst into tears at the sight of a benevolent-looking lady, whom undoubtedly she asked for money for the same good object. The benevolent-looking lady gave her nothing, and she tried her woes upon several other people, none of whom

gave her anything. I was forced to doubt whether, upon the whole, her game was worth the candle, or whether she was really making a provision for her declining years by this means. To be sure, her time was not worth much, and she could hardly have got any other work, she was so young; but it seemed hardly a paying industry. By any careful calculation, I do not believe she would have been found to have amassed more than ten or fifteen cents a day; and perhaps she really had a sick mother at home. Many persons are obliged to force their emotions for money, whom we should not account wholly undeserving; yet I suppose a really good citizen who found this little girl trying to cultivate the sympathies of charitable people by that system of irrigation would have had her suppressed as an impostor.

In a way she was an impostor, though her sick mother may have been starving, as she said. It is a nice question. Shall we always give to him that asketh? Or shall we give to him that asketh only when we know that he has come by his destitution honestly? In other words, what is a deserving case of charity—or, rather, what is not? Is a starving or freezing person to be denied because he or she is drunken or vicious? What is desert in the poor? What is de-

sert in the rich, I suppose the reader would answer. If this is so, and if we ought not to succor an undeserving poor person, then we ought not to succor an undeserving rich person. It will be said that a rich person, however undeserving will never be in need of our succor, but this is not so clear. If we saw a rich person fall in a fit before the horses of a Fifth Avenue omnibus, ought not we to run and lift him up, although we knew him to be a man whose life was stained by every vice and excess, and cruel, wanton, idle, luxurious? I know that I am imagining a quite impossible rich person; but once imagined, ought not we to save him all the same as if he were deserving? I do not believe the most virtuous person will say we ought not; and ought not we, then, to rescue the most worthless tramp fallen under the wheels of the Juggernaut of want? Is charity the reward of merit?

VII.

My friend who was not sure that Christ's doctrine was the last word in regard to charity, was quite sure that you ought to have a conscience against dead-beats, whom I suggested for his consideration, especially the dead-beats who come to your house and try to work you upon one pretext or another. He said he never

gave to them, and I asked what he answered them when they professed themselves in instant want; and whether he plumply denied them; and it appeared that he told them he had other use for his money. I suspect this was a proper answer to make. It had never occurred to me, but I think I will try it with the next one who comes, and see what effect it has upon him. Hitherto I have had no better way than to offer them a compromise: if they ask twenty, to propose ten; and if they ask ten, to propose five; and so on down. The first time I did this (it was with an actor, who gave me his I O U—the first and only I O U that I ever got: I suppose he was used to giving it on the stage) it seemed to me that I had made ten dollars, and since then it has seemed to me that I made five dollars on several occasions; but I now think this was an illusion, and that I only saved the money: I did not actually add to my store.

It is usually indigent literature which presents itself with these imaginative demands, and I think usually fictionists of the romantic school. I do not know but it would be well for me as a man of principle to confine my benefactions to destitute realists: I am sure it would be cheaper. Last winter there came to me a gentleman thrown out of employment by the comple-

tion of an encyclopedia he had been at work on, and he said that he was in absolute want of food for his family, who had that morning been set out with all his household stuff on the sidewalk for default of rent. I relieved his immediate necessity, and suggested to him that if he would write a simple, unrhetorical account of his eviction I could probably sell it for him; that this sort of thing mostly happened to the inarticulate classes; and that he had the chance of doing a perfectly fresh thing in literature. He caught at the notion, and said he would begin at once, and I said the sooner the better. He asked if it would not be well to get the narrative type-written, and I begged him not to wait for that; but he said that he knew a person who would typewrite it for him without charge. I could only urge haste, and he went away in a glow of enterprise. He left with me the address of a twenty-five cent lodging-house in the Bowery; for he explained that he had got money enough, by selling his furniture on the sidewalk to send his family into the country, and he was living alone and as cheaply as he could. While at work on his narrative he came for more relief, and then he vanished out of my knowledge altogether. I had a leisure afternoon, and went down into the Bowery to his lodging-house, and found

that he really lodged there, but he was then out; and so far as I am concerned he is out still. I am out myself, in the amount I advanced him, and which he was to repay me from the money for his eviction article. He never wrote it, apparently; and perhaps his experience of eviction lacked the vital element of reality. I am quite sure he was at heart a romanticist, for he was an Englishman, and the Englishmen are all romanticists.

VIII.

I was at one time worked for a period of years by a German-born veteran of our war, whom I was called out to see one night from dinner, when I was full of good cheer, and, of course, quite helpless against a case of want like his. He represented that he was the victim of an infirmity brought on by falling from a burning bridge under the rebel fire, and was liable to be overtaken by it at any moment; and he showed me all sorts of surgeons' certificates in proof of the fact, as well as kindly notes from college professors and clergymen. I had, therefore, a double motive for befriending him. I had as little wish that he should be overtaken by his infirmity in my reception-room as that he should go on sleeping in unfinished houses and basement areas; and so I gave him some money

at once. He was to have his pension money at the end of the month, and till then he said he could live on what I gave him. I hurried him out of the house as fast as I could, for I did not feel safe from his infirmity while he was there. But he kept coming back, and always, in view of his threatening infirmity, got money from me; I am not sure that I always pitied him so much. At last he agreed to seek refuge in a soldiers' home, upon my urgence, and I lost sight of him for several years. When he reappeared, one summer, at the seaside, as destitute as ever, and as threatening as ever in regard to his infirmity, it seemed that he had passed the time in working his way from one soldiers' home to another, in Maine and in New York, in Virginia and in Ohio, but everywhere, because of some informality in his papers, the gates were closed against him. I gave him a suit of clothes and some more money, and I thought I had done with him at last, for he said that now, as soon as he got his next pension money, he was going home to Germany, to spend his last years with his brother,—a surgeon, retired from the German army,—who could take care of him and his infirmity, and they could live cheaply together, upon their joint pensions. I applauded so wise a plan, and we parted with expressions of mutual esteem.

Two or three months later, after I had come from the seaside place, where he visited me, to New York for the winter, he presented himself again to me. Heaven knows how he had found me out, but there he was, with his infirmity, and his story was that now he had money enough to buy his steamer ticket to Hamburg, but that he lacked his railroad fare from Hamburg to the little village where his brother lived. His notion seemed to be that I should subscribe with others to supply the amount; but I had at last a gleam of worldly wisdom. I said I thought the subscription business had gone on long enough; and he assented that it had at least gone on a good while.

"Very well, then," I added; "you go now with the money you have for your steamer ticket, and buy it. Come back here with the ticket and I will not oblige you to wait till you can collect your railroad fare from different people; I will give you the whole of it myself."

Will it be credited that this sufferer did not come back with his steamer ticket? I have never seen him since, though a few weeks later I went to call upon him at the ten-cent hotel in the Bowery where he said he slept. The clerk said he was staying there, but he could not throw any light upon his intention of going back to Germany, for he had never heard him say

anything about it. He was out at the moment, like my romanticist Englishman.

Whilst I lived in Boston I had a visit from another romanticistic Englishman, who professed to be no other than the cousin of Mr. Walter Besant, though he gave me reason to think he was mistaken. It seems that he had arrived that very morning from Central Africa, and, for all I know, from the mystic presence of She herself. In that strange land, he wished me to believe, he had been a playwright and a journalist, but he really looked and spoke and smelled like a groom. He dropped his aspirates everywhere, and when he picked them up he put them on in the wrong places. In his parlance I was a bird of night, or several such, and I cannot rid myself now of the belated conjecture that he had possibly mistaken me for Mr. 'Aggard. He was a cheery little creature, however; and when I put it to him, as between man and man, whether he did not think he was telling me a rather improbable story, he owned so sweetly he did that I could not help contributing to pay his expenses 'ome to Heng-land. He was not quite clear why he should have come round by way of Boston, but he said he would send me the money back directly he got 'ome.

He did not do so, and my experience is that they

never do so. They may forget it, they may never be able to spare the money. Never? I am wrong. Only last winter I made my usual compromise with a man who asked ten, and lent him five; and though he was yet another Englishman, and, for anything I can say, another romanticist, he returned my little loan with such a manly, honest letter that my heart smote me for not having made it ten. I looked upon his five-dollar bill as a gift from heaven, and I made haste to bestow it where I am sure it will never stand the remotest chance of getting back to me.

IX.

I wish, sometimes, that they would not say they were going to send the money back; but I wish this rather for their sake than for mine. I am pretty well inured to the disappointment sure to follow; but I am afraid that the poor pretense demoralizes them, and, above all, I do not wish to demoralize them by my connivance. Once, when I was a visitor for the Associated Charities in Boston, the question came up in the weekly meeting whether, if one gave money when there was no hope of getting work, one ought to let the beneficiary suppose that one expected to get it back. Ought one to say that he was making his gift

a loan? Would it not be better to treat it frankly as a gift? A man to whose goodness I mentally uncover said he had given that point some thought, and he believed one ought not to pretend that it was a loan when it was not; but one might fitly say, "I let you have this money. If you are ever able to give it back, I shall be glad to have you do so." It seems to me that this is the wisest possible word on the subject.

Of course the reason why we have such a bad conscience in giving is that we feel we ought not to pauperize people. Perhaps this is one reason why we give so little to obvious destitution. I am this moment just in from the street, where I gave alms to a one-armed tatterdemalion, with something of this obscure struggle in my mind. As I came up with him, well fenced against the bitter wind that blew through his ruins, I foresaw that I should give him something, and I took from my outside pocket all the change there was in it—three coppers, a nickel, and a piece of twenty-five. I was ashamed to give the coppers, and I felt that a good citizen ought not to give a quarter for fear of pauperizing a man who had already nothing in the world, and no hopeful appearance of being able to get anything. So I gave him the nickel, and I am not quite easy in my mind about it.

Perhaps I was remotely influenced not to give a quarter to this one-armed man by the behavior of another one-armed man whom I befriended. I did give him a quarter, not from a good impulse, but because I had no smaller change, and it was that or nothing. The gift seemed to astound him. It was in a shoe-store, where I had only one boot on, in the process of trying a pair, and I was quite helpless against him when he burst into blessings of Irish picturesqueness, and asked my name, apparently that he might pray for me without making a mistake in the address; and when I said, from a natural bashfulness, or a mean fear that he might find me out at home and come again to beg of me, that I would take the chance of the answer of his prayers getting to me, he told me all about the railroad accident that lost him his arm; and not content with this, he took his poor stump—as if to prove that it was real—and rubbed it over me, and blessed me and blessed me again, till I was quite ashamed of getting so much more than my money's worth. Shall I own that I began to fear this grateful man was not entirely sober?

X.

I dare say poverty and the pangs of hunger and cold do not foster habits of strict temperance. It is a great pity they do not, since they are so common. If they did, they could do more than anything else to advance the cause of prohibition. Still, I will not say that all the poor I give to are in liquor at the moment, or that drunkenness is peculiarly the vice of one-armed destitution. Neither is gratitude a very common or articulate emotion in my beneficiaries. They are mostly, if thankful at all, silently thankful; and I find this in better taste. I do not believe that as a rule they are very imaginative, or at least so imaginative as romantic novelists. Yet there was one sufferer came up the back elevator on a certain evening not long ago, and burst upon me suddenly, somehow as if he had come up through a trap in the stage, who seemed to have rather a gift in that way. He was most amusingly shabby and dirty (though I do not know why shabbiness and dirt should be amusing), with a cutaway coat worn down to its ultimate gloss, a frayed neckcloth, and the very foulest collar I can remember seeing. But he had a brisk and pleasing address, and I must say an excellent diction. He called me by name, and at once said that friends whom

he had expected to find in New York were most inopportunely in Europe at this moment of his arrival from a protracted sojourn in the West. But he was very anxious to get on that night to Hartford, and complete his journey home from Denver, where he had fallen a prey to the hard times in the very hour of the most prosperous speculation; and he proposed, as an inducement to a loan, borrowing only enough money to take him to New Haven by the boat—he would walk the rest of the way to Hartford. I no more believed him than I should believe a ghost if it said it was a ghost. But I believed that he was in want,—his clothes proved that,—and I gave him the little sum he asked. He said he would send it back the instant he reached Hartford; and I am left to think that he has not yet arrived. But I am sure that even that brief moment of his airy and almost joyous companionship was worth the money. He was of an order of classic impostors dear to literature, and grown all too few in these times of hurry and fierce competition. I wish I had seen more of him, and yet I cannot say that I wish he would come back; it might be embarassing for both of us.

Not long before his visit I had a call from another imaginative person, whom I was not able to meet so

fully in her views. This was a middle-aged lady who said she had come on that morning from Boston to see me. She owned we had never met before, and that she was quite unknown to me; but apparently she did not think this any bar to her asking me for two hundred and fifty dollars to aid in the education of her son. I confess that I was bewildered for a moment. My simple device of offering half the amount demanded would have been too costly: I really could not have afforded to give her one hundred and twenty-five dollars, even if she had been willing to compromise, which I was not sure of. I am afraid the reader will think I shirked. I said that I had a great many demands upon me, and I ended by refusing to give anything. I really do not know how I had the courage; perhaps it was only frenzy. She insisted, with reasons for my giving which she laid before me; but either they did not convince me, or I had hardened my heart so well that they could not prevail with me, and she got up and went away. As she went out of the room, she looked about its appointments, which I had not thought very luxurious before, and said that she saw I was able to *live* very comfortably, at any rate; and left me to the mute reproach of my carpets and easy-chairs.

I do not remember whether she alleged any inspiration in coming to see me for this good object; but a summer or two since a lady came to me, at my hotel in the mountains, who said that she had been moved to do so by an impulse which seemed little short of mystical. She said that she was not ordinarily superstitious, but she had wakened that morning in Boston with my name the first thing in her thoughts, and it seemed so directly related to what she had in view that she could not resist the suggestion it conveyed that she should come at once to lay her scheme before me. She took a good deal of time to do this; and romantic as it appeared, I felt sure that she was working with real material. It was of a nature so complex, however, and on a scale so vast, that I should despair of getting it intelligibly before the reader, and I will not attempt it. I listened with the greatest interest; but at the end I was obliged to say that I thought her mystical impulse was mistaken; I was sorry it had deceived her; I was quite certain that I had not the means or the tastes to enter upon the æsthetic enterprise which she proposed. In return, I suggested a number of millionaires whose notorious softness of heart, or whose wish to get themselves before the public by their good deeds, ought to make them more

available, and we parted the best of friends. I am not yet quite able to make up my mind that she was not the victim of a hypnotic suggestion from the unseen world, and altogether innocent in her appeal to me.

XI.

In fact, I am not able to think very ill even of impostors. It is a great pity for them, and even a great shame, to go about deceiving people of means; but I do not believe they are so numerous as people of means imagine. As a rule, I do not suppose they succeed for long, and their lives must be full of cares and anxieties, which of course one must not sympathize with, but which are real enough, nevertheless. People of means would do well to consider this, and at least not plume themselves very much upon not being cheated. If they have means, it is perhaps part of the curse of money, or of that unfriendliness to riches which our religion is full of, that money should be got from them by unworthy persons. They have their little romantic superstitions, too. One of these is the belief that beggars are generally persons who will not work, and that they are often persons of secret wealth, which they constantly increase by preying upon the public. I take leave to doubt this altogether.

Beggary appears to me in its conditions almost harder than any other trade; and from what I have seen of the amount it earns, the return it makes is smaller than any other. I should not myself feel safe in refusing anything to a beggar upon the theory of a fortune sewn into a mattress, to be discovered after the beggar has died intestate. I know that a great many good people pin their faith to such mattresses; but I should be greatly surprised if one such could be discovered in the whole city of New York. On the other hand, I feel pretty sure that there are hundreds and even thousands of people who are insufficiently fed and clad in New York; and if here and there one of these has the courage of his misery, and asks alms, one must not be too cocksure it is a sin to give to him.

Of course one must not pauperize him: that ought by all means to be avoided; I am always agreeing to that. But if he is already pauperized; if we know by statistics and personal knowledge that there are hundreds and even thousands of people who cannot get work, and that they must suffer if they do not beg, let us not be too hard upon them. Let us refuse them kindly, and try not to see them; for if we see their misery, and do not give, that demoralizes us. Come, I say; have not we some rights, too? No man strikes

another man a blow without becoming in sort and measure a devil; and to see what looks like want, and to deny its prayer, has an effect upon the heart which is not less depraving. Perhaps it would be a fair division of the work if we let the deserving rich give only to the deserving poor, and kept the undeserving poor for ourselves, who, if we are not rich, are not deserving, either.

XII.

I should be sorry if anything I have said seemed to cast slight upon the organized efforts at relieving want, especially such as unite inquiry into the facts and the provision of work with the relief of want. All that I contend for is the right—or call it the privilege—of giving to him that asketh, even when you do not know that he needs, or deserves to need. Both here and in Boston I have lent myself—sparingly and grudgingly, I'll own—to those organized efforts; and I know how sincere and generous they are, how effective they often are, how ineffective. They used to let me go mostly to the Italian folk who applied for aid in Boston, because I could more or less meet them in their own language; but once they gave me a Russian to manage—I think because I was known to have a devotion for Tolstoy and for the other Russian novel-

ists. The Russian in question was not a novelist, but a washer of bags in a sugar-refinery; and at the time I went to make my first call upon him he had been "laid off," as the euphemism is, for two months; that is, he had been without work, and had been wholly dependent upon the allowance the charities made him. He had a wife and a complement of children—I do not know just how many; but they all seemed to live in one attic room in the North End. I acquainted myself fully with the case, and went about looking for work in his behalf. In this, I think, I found my only use: but it was use to me only, for the people of whom I asked work for him treated me with much the same ignominy as if I had been seeking it for myself; and it was well that I should learn just what the exasperated mind of a fellow-being is when he is asked for work, and has none to give. He regards the applicant as an oppressor, or at least an aggressor, and he is eager to get rid of him by bluntness, by coldness, even by rudeness. After the unavailing activity of a week or two, I myself began to resent the Russian's desire for work, and I visited him at longer and longer intervals to find whether he had got anything to do; for he was looking after work, too. At last I let a month go by, and when I came he met me at the street

door—or, say, alley door—of the tenement-house with a smiling face. He was always smiling, poor fellow, but now he smiled joyously. He had got a job—they always call it a job, and the Italians pronounce it a *giobbe*. His job was one which testified to the heterogeneous character of American civilization in even amusing measure. The Jews had come into a neighboring street so thickly that they had crowded every one else out; they had bought the Congregational meeting-house, which they were turning into a synagogue, and they had given this orthodox Russian the job of knocking the nails out of the old woodwork. His only complaint was that the Jews would not let him work on Saturday, and the Christians would not let him work on Sunday, and so he could earn but five dollars a week. He did not blame me for my long failure to help him; on the contrary, so far as I could make out from the limited vocabulary we enjoyed in common, he was grateful. But I have no doubt he was glad to be rid of me; and Heaven knows how glad I was to be rid of him.

I do not believe I ever found work for any one, though I tried diligently and I think not unwisely. Perhaps the best effect from my efforts was that they inspired the poor creatures to efforts of their own,

which were sometimes successful. I had on my hands and heart for nearly a whole winter the most meritorious Italian family I ever knew, without being able to do anything but sympathize and offer secret alms in little gifts to the children. Once I got one of the boys a place in a book-store, but the law would not allow him to take it because he was not past the age of compulsory schooling. The father had a peripatetic fruit-stand, which he pushed about on a cart; and his great aim was to get the privilege of stationing himself at one of the railroad depots. I found that there were stations which were considered particularly desirable by the fruiterers, and that the chief of these was in front of the old United States court-house. A fruiterer out of place, whose family I visited for the charities, tried even to corrupt me, and promised me that if I would get him this *stendio* (they Italianize "stand" to that effect, just as they translate "bar" into *barra*, and so on) he would give me something outright. "*E poi, ci sarà sempre la mancia*" ("And then there will always be the drink-money"). I lost an occasion to lecture him upon the duties of the citizen; but I am not a ready speaker.

The sole success—but it was very signal—of my winter's work was getting a young Italian into the hos-

pital. He had got a rheumatic trouble of the heart from keeping a *stendio* in a cellarway, and when I saw him I thought it would be little use to get him into the hospital. The young doctor who had charge of him, and whom I looked up, was of the same mind. But I could not help trying for him; and when the sisters at the hospital (where he got well, in spite of all) said he could be received, I made favor for an ambulance to carry him to it. It was a beautiful white spring day when I went to tell him the hour the ambulance would call; the sky was blue overhead, the canaries sang in their cages along the street. I left all this behind when I entered the dark, chill tenement-house, where that dreadful *poverty-smell* struck the life out of the spring in my soul at the first breath. The sick man's apartment was clean and sweet, through his mother's care (this poor woman was as wholly a lady as any I have seen); but when I passed into his room, he clutched himself up from the bed, and stretched his arms toward me with gasps of "*Lo spedale, lo spedale!*" The spring, the coming glory of this world, was nothing to him. It was the hospital he wanted; and to the poor, to the incurable disease of our conditions, the hospital is the best we have to give. To be sure, there is also the grave.

THE CLOSING OF THE HOTEL.

It scarcely began before the last of August, when the guests ebbed away by floods, in every train. The end of the season was purely conventional. One day the almanac said it was August, and the hotel was full; another day the almanac said it was September, and the vast caravansary was instantly touched with depletion, and within a week it hung loose upon its inmates like the raiment upon the frame of a man who has been Banting. There was no change in the weather; that remained as summerlike as ever, and grew more and more divinely beautiful. The conditions continued the same, only more agreeable; the service was still abundant and perfect; the table was of an unimpaired variety; there was no such sudden revival of business or pleasure in the city that people should abandon the leisure of the sea-shore; the ocean smiled as serenely, the breakers crashed as lyrically along the beach; the country, for those who were to prolong

their outing, would be dry and dusty. But a certain fiction of the calendar had reported itself in the human consciousness; and as men are the prey of superstition and emotion, the population of the huge hostelry yielded by a single impulse to the pressure of the pretence that it was September.

I.

Huge, I have called the hostelry, and I do not know that I can add to the effect of size which I wish to impart by saying that it is of a veritably American immensity. It stretches along the sea like the shore of a continent; and when I walked from one end of its seaward veranda to the other, I felt as if I were going from Castine in Maine to St. Augustine in Florida. Really, it is only the fifth of a mile in length, but I have ordinarily lived in houses so much shorter that my fancy takes wing when I think of it, and will not brook a briefer flight. In like manner, when I speak of its thousand dwellers as a population, I am perhaps giving way to an effect of habitually sharing my roof with four or five persons.

They were nearly a thousand when I came, but the place was so spacious that I had large areas of the piazza to myself whenever I liked, and I was often a

solitary wayfarer up and down the halls that projected themselves in dimmer and dimmer perspective between the suites of rooms on the right hand and on the left. It was the dining-room, with its forest of pine posts, its labyrinth of tables, its army of black waiters, and its only a little larger army of guests, which gave that impression of a dense overpeopling, such as one could not feel in greater degree even in the tenement quarters of the East Side. This was peculiarly the case on a Sunday, when the guests had guests; and in the tramp of the black forces, the clash of crockery, and the harsh jangle of the cutlery, mingled with the dull, subdued sound of the guttling and guzzling, there was something like the noise of a legion stirring in its harness, and hailing Cæsar with the warlike devotion inspired by a munificent donative.

In the early morning there was a hardly less powerfull impression of numbers, when the crying children, the half-hushed quarrelling of some husbands and wives, and the loud and loving adieux of others parting for the day, burst the frail partitions of their rooms, and mixed in the corridors with the rush of the porters' trunk-bearing trucks, pushed over the long carpeted stretches with the voluble clatter of so many lawn-mowers, the flight of the call-boys' feet, the fierce

clangor of the chambermaids' bells, and the strongly brogued controversies and gossip of the chambermaids themselves. No doubt all these effects were exaggerated by the senses just unfolding themselves in the waking consciousness, and taking angry note of the disturbing influences without. But the multitude sheltered by a single roof was nevertheless very great: at the height of the season, the guests and the servants, the drones and the workers, were some fifteen hundred together.

II.

All at once, as I say, a great part of the multitude vanished. All at once, on the verandas, and in the wide office swept with yet cooler currents from the sweet-breathed sea, I was sensible of a sudden decimation. I cannot fix the date with precision, but one night at about half-past eight the great moony electries which swung in space high over the floors of the office, the ball-room, and the dining-room paled their effectual fires, which they never afterward relumed, and left us to the batlike waverings of the naphtha gas. I remember the sinking of the heart with which my senses took cognizance of the fact. No one spoke, or audibly noted it; the talking groups talked on in fallen tones; the people who were reading books or papers drew

them a little nearer, or put them a little farther; those who were writing letters at the long tables in the reading-room silently adjusted their vision to the obscurity. It was like the effect of some august natural catastrophe; the general disposition was to ignore the fact, as we shall perhaps try to ignore the fact that the world has begun to burn up when it begins to burn, and pretend that it is merely a fire over in Hoboken or Long Island City that the department will soon have under control.

It may have been the morning of that day, or the morning of the next, but it was at least some neighboring morning, that I sauntered down to one of the forenoon trains and saw a large detachment of our colored troops departing. They were very gay, as they nearly always are, poor fellows; and they were exchanging humorous and derisive adieux with a detachment of those who were to remain, and who pretended on their part to mock their departing comrades. These helped them off with their baggage, wheeling the heavy truck-loads of the trunks which the porters left to them; and, when all was ready, shaking hands again and again, and telling them to be good to themselves. At the last moment a very short, stout, little black man appeared with a truck heaped high with baggage, and

rushed it down the long esplanade to the platform beside the train, amid the wild eheers and wagers of the going and staying speetators. He had all the ery till the train aetually started, when a young eolored brother burst out of the front door of a ear from whieh it had detaehed itself, and began to run it down with a heavy grip-saek flying wildly about and beating his legs and flanks. He had taken his plaee in this ear unaware of its fate, and had remained in it, exulting from the open window in his sole possession; and now the seeret of his proprietorship had been revealed to his dismay. But it was a very kindly train; when his pursuit beeame known, the loeomotive obligingly slowed to a stand, and he was pulled aboard the rear platform amidst a jubilation whieh few real advantages inspire in this world.

III.

An indefinable gloom settled upon me as the train eurved out into the marsh, and the laughing, ehattering, eheering, hat-waving remnant eame baek to the hotel and dispersed about their work. There were still a great many of them, and there were still a great many of us, but I felt that the end had begun. I do not know whether I felt this faet more keenly or not when the dentist, whose presenee I had been taeitly

proud of all through August, abandoned the house which he had helped to render metropolitan. But I am sure that it was a definite shock to lose him; and that the tooth which his presence had held in abeyance asserted itself in a wild throe at his going. Once as I passed the door of his office his name was on it and his hours; when I returned fifteen minutes later to ask an appointment with him his name was gone, and the useless hours alone remained. On his way to take passage in his cat-boat for the farthermost parts of the Great South Bay, he kindly stopped and advised about the grumbling tooth. Then he passed out of the hotel, and left it to ache if it must, with an unrequited longing for the filling fatally delayed.

The doctor went a week later, but before this other changes had taken place, among which the most cataclysmal was the passing of the band, which vanished as it were in a sudden crash of silence. The whole month long I had heard it playing in the afternoon midway of the long veranda, and in the evening on its platform in the ballroom, and with my imperfect knowledge of music had waited each day and night till it came to that dissolute, melancholy melody to which the Eastern girls danced their wicked dance at the World's Fair; not because I like dissolute and

melancholy things, but because I was then able to make sure what tune the band was playing. I had in this way become used to the band, and I missed it poignantly, if one can miss a thing poignantly; which I doubt. Other people seemed to enjoy it, and I like to see people enjoying themselves. Besides, its going brought the dancing to a close, which I enjoyed myself.

I mean that I enjoyed looking at the dancing. This was for the most part, even at the height of our gayety, performed by boys and girls, and very young children, whom I saw led away to bed heart-broken at nine o'clock. One small couple of these I loved very much. I fancied them a little brother and sister, and I delighted in their courage and perseverance in taking the floor for every dance, and through all changes of tune and figure turning solemnly round and round with their arms about each other's waists. One night there came a bad, bad boy, who posted himself in front of them, and plagued them, jumping up and down before them and hindering their serious gyration. Another evening the little brother was cross and would not dance, and the little sister had to pull him out on the floor and make him.

Sometimes, however, there were even grown people

on the floor. Then I chose a very pretty young couple, whom I called my couple, and shared their joy in the waltz without their knowing it. We were by all odds the best dancers and the best looking. We stayed long enough to poison the others with jealousy, but we always went away rather early. When the band left, all this innocent pleasure ended. There was one delirious evening, indeed, when the floor-manager, in default of other music, whistled a waltz, and the young ladies, in default of young men, trod a mad measure with each other to his sibilation. But this was a dying burst of gayety: it did not and could not happen again.

IV.

I have to accuse myself of giving no just idea of the constant flowing and dribbling away of the guests, who never ceased departing. The trains that bore them and their baggage brought no others to replace them, and the house gradually emptied itself until not more than a poor three hundred remained. With each defection of a considerable number of guests there followed a reduction of the helping force, who now no longer departed laughing, but with a touch of that loneliness falling upon us all. It must be under-

stood that we were all staying on in our closing hotel by sufferance. It closed officially on the 10th, but the landlord was to remain, and such guests as wished might remain too. This made us eager to linger till the very last moment we were allowed.

Ever since the elevator had ceased to run, there had been a sense of doom in the air. One day we noted a fine reluctance in the elevator; when people crowded it full, it would not go up. Then it began to waver under a few; it made false starts and stops. A placard presently said, "Elevator not running." Then this was removed, and the elevator ran again for a day or two. At last it ceased to run so finally that no placard was needed. The elevator boys went away; it was as if the elevator were extinct.

I think it was on the same day that the hall clock stopped. The clock was started again by the head porter, but after that the hotel ran on borrowed time. Once it borrowed the time of me, whose watch has not once been right in thirty-three years, a whole generation!

The temperature of the water ceased to be reported even before the end of August; the hours of high and low tide were no longer given. Twice when the reporters came down to see the yacht-race off our beach

the bulletin-board was covered with yellow telegrams from the coast where it was really seen, boasting the victory and triumphant defeat of the *Defender*. This quickened our pulses for the moment; and one night the ladies all put on their best dresses, and assembled for a progressive euchre party in the vast acreage of the parlor. It was a heroic but perhaps desperate act of gayety.

V.

One of the most striking natural phenomena of the hotel closing was the arrival of the gulls on our beach, or rather on the waters beyond the beach. I had wondered at their absence all August long, but punctually on the first day of September they came. The weather had not changed for them any more than it had for the guests who fled the place at the same date, but perhaps the wild wheeling and screaming things had a prescience of the autumnal storms, and came with prophetic welcome in their wings.

Otherwise the premonitions of change were within the hotel itself, and they were more impressive whenever they assumed an official character. It was with a real emotion that one day I missed one of the clerks out of the number within the office. He was there, and then he was not there; it was as if he had been

lost overboard during his watch. I had scarcely recovered from his loss when another clerk, upon whose distribution of the mail we all used to hang impatient for the equal disappointment of letters or no letters, ceased from his ministrations as if he had all along been a wraith of mist, and had simply melted away. The room clerk, who was a more definite personality to us, went next, with a less supernatural effect; he even said he might come back, but he did not come back, and the office force was reduced to the cashier and a young clerk not perceptible earlier in the season.

At all great hotels the landlord is usually a remote and problematical personage, and so it was with ours until the office force began to thin away around him. Then he became more and more visible, tangible, conversable, and proved a distinctly agreeable addition to our circle, in which the note of an increasing domesticity was struck. I do not know of anything that gave so keen a sense of our resolution into a single family, still large, but insensibly drawn together by the need of a mutual comfort and encouragement, as the invasion of the hotel by a multitude of crickets. Whether it was the departure of the human host which tempted the crickets in-doors, or whether it was some such instinct as brought the gulls to our seas, they

were all at once all over the place, piercing its deepening silence with their harsh stridulation. In the chambers they carked so loud and clear that one could hardly sleep for them, and in the glooming reaches and expanses of the corridors, parlors, halls, and dining-room they shrilled in incessant chorus.

VI.

After the first moment, when the association with the home hearth and the simple fireside evenings of other days had spent itself, the crickets were rather awful, and personally I would rather have had the band back. But their weird music prompted a closer union of the guests, and our chairs were closer together on the veranda and in the office. We found that we were very charming and interesting people, and I began to wonder if I had not lost more than I could ever make good by not seeking the acquaintance of the seven hundred others who were gone. From day to day, from night to night, our numbers were lessened, but we never spoke of the departures; we instinctively recognized that it would have been bad form; we were like the garrison of a beleaguered city, that lost a few men by famine or foray from time to time, but kept up a heroic pretense that they were as many as ever. Or,

we were like a shipwrecked crew clinging to a water-logged vessel, and caught from it now and then by a hungry shark or a hungry wave, or dropping away into the gulf from mere exhaustion.

These figures are rather violent, and present only a subjective effect in the more sensitive spirits. As a matter of fact we lived luxuriously all the time. The time came when we heard that on a certain day the *chef* was going, but we should not have known he was gone by any difference in the table. It grew rather more attractive; if there were fewer dishes, they were better cooked; one could fancy a touch of personal attention in them, which one could not have fancied when we were seven hundred and fifty at table, and the help who served us were three hundred and fifty.

VII.

The help had gradually dwindled away till there were not more than fifty. I had kept my waiter through all; he was a quiet elderly man of formed habits, whom I associated with the idea of permanency in every way, so that I could scarcely believe that we were to be parted. But one morning he was seized by the curious foreboding of departure which seemed really one of its symptoms among his tribe, and he

said he did not know but he should be going soon. I said, Oh, I hoped not; and he answered bravely that he hoped not too, but he shook his head, and we both felt that it was best to let a final half-dollar pass between us in expression of a provisional farewell.

That was indeed the last of him, and that day when I came in to lunch I found that I was appointed another table, in another place, with another waiter to take my order. It was a little shock, but I was not unprepared. I had noted the gradual dismantling of the tables until now they stretched long rows of barren surfaces down the tenth of a mile which the dining-room covered, and showed their reverberated labyrinth in the mirrors of the vast sideboards at either end of the hall. The remaining guests were snugly grouped on the seaward side of the room, where our tables commanded the marine views that I had long vainly envied others.

But after the first transition I was changed to another table with another waiter, a tall student from Yale, who joined to a scholarly absence of mind concerning my wants an appreciation of my style of jokes that went far to console me, though I was not sure that it was quite decorous for him to laugh at them when they were addressed to others. I tried to

grapple him to me with early and frequent donatives, and he would have been willing enough to stay; but the guests kept going and the helpers were cut off, one by one, till the hour came when we both felt—

"The first slight swerving of the heart
That words are powerless to express,
And leave it still unsaid in part,
Or say it in too great excess."

The next morning he told me he was going; and as I sauntered down to take the train for a brief flight to New York, I saw him on the platform in citizen's dress and smoking a cigarette. He was laughing and joking with some of the waiters who still lingered, and bidding them take care of themselves, and promising a like vigilance of his own welfare.

After that there was the short interval of a single meal when I was served by a detached waiter, before I was handed over to the kindly helper who next had charge of me. I clung to him anxiously, for I did not know what day or hour I should lose him; I did not know how soon he might lose me!

In the passing of the head porter there was something deeply dramatic, almost tragic for me. We had become acquaintances, friends, even, I hope, and I had become sensible of the gradual disappearance of his subordinates until they were reduced to what I

may call the tail porter in contradistinction to the head porter. Then the head porter said that he had a great mind to be going himself; but when I asked him why, he could not well say, and he agreed with me that it might be better for him to stay. We counted up the remaining families together, and found them twenty, and I convinced him that by the most modest computation here were twenty dollars in fees before him. I thought that I had secured his allegiance to the end, but the very morning before the pensive record of these events I went to look for him in his accustomed place to get my shoes "shined," and he was not there. The barber was there, looking in a vague disoccupation across the marshes to the northward of the hotel, and I asked him where the porter was. He closed his eyes that he might open his lips more impressively, and breathed the word, "Andato."

"Gone?" I echoed.

The barber was a beautifully smiling, richly languaged Sicilian, and he responded in an elegant sympathy with my dismay: "Sì; andato. Me ne vado anch' io, fra pochi giorni. M' impazzo quì. Guardi!" (Yes; gone. I am going, I myself, in a few days. I madden here. Look!) With the last word he touched my arm lightly to make me turn, and pointed to the

long plank footway, stilted upon the marshes from one to the other side of the railroad curve, and leading to the boat-house on the bay beyond their wide levels. Midway of this I saw a solitary figure, whose lank length and forward droop I could not mistake. The departing porter looked like the last citizen abandoning the ruins of Persepolis, and I—I felt like Persepolis!

VIII.

I strive, perhaps in vain, to impart a sense of the slowly creeping desolation, the gradual paresis, that was seizing upon the late full and happy life of our hotel; and I have not strictly observed the order of the successive events. I have not spoken of the swift evanescence of the bell-boys, the first of whom began so jubilantly with me when I came, covenanting to deliver a pitcher of ice-water at my door every morning at ten, and every evening at eight. He was faithful to his trust, and embarrassed me with a superfluity of ice-water, which ten men could hardly have drunk, and lived; but when the economic frame of our hotel began to be shaken, he was early in warning me that he might go at any moment. He was No. 18, but he promised me that No. 10 would see that I was daily and nightly deluged with ice-water, and No. 10 was

exemplarily true to me for a day. Then he vanished too, with a grateful sense, I hope, of my folly in bestowing a preliminary half-dollar upon him. But he had made interest for me, I found, with No. 4, and No. 4 deluded me by his fleeting permaneney for a week. One morning he told me he was going, and he took a last half-dollar from me with a true eompassion for my forlorn ease. He was so visibly the last of the bell-boys that he eould not assign me to a lower number. For one night the head porter brought my iee-water. Now the night porter brings it, and if he should leave before I do— But I will not antieipate, as the older romaneers used to say. I will not look forward, even in the ease of the ehambermaids, of whom there have been already three ehanges, with the prospeet next week of having in some of the laundry girls to do up the work.

IX.

The laundry itself was attaeked ten days ago by the general paralysis of the hotel's funetions, so far as the guests' linen was eoneerned, whieh has sinee had to be sent far inland by the enterprise of one of the bathing-pavilion men, and precariously returned on a variable date. I forget whether the laundry sueeumbed

before or after the closing of the refreshment-room. The hotel sold no strong drinks, and the magnificent facilities of the bar were inadequately employed by a soda fountain, a variety of mineral waters in bottles, a supply of ginger ale, and lemons for lemonade. On an opposite counter were Huyler's candies, and a choice of chewing-gum; the salubrious pepsin, or the merely innocent peppermint. When the moment for dismantling this festive place arrived, with the unexpectedness of all the other moments of our slow dehabilitation, I was present, and saw the presiding genius packing up his stock of lemons. It gave me a peculiar pang. I had never bought any of them, or wanted any, but I had personally acquainted myself with almost every example of the fruit; I knew those lemons apart, and from often study of them on their shelf, as I stood hardily sipping my ginger ale before the counter, I was almost as intimate with them as with the stock of the news-dealer.

I must say that as to the books his stock was terribly dull. He owned himself that it was dull, and when I asked him where in the world he got together such a lot of stupid books, he could only say that they were such as were appointed to be sold in summer hotels by the news company. The newspapers

were rather better: if they were not livelier, they were lighter, or at least more ephemeral. I bought freely of them; the dailies in the mornings, and the weeklies in the afternoons, with their longer leisure. I bought the magazines, which are now often as cheap as the papers, and, unlike the books, are seldom dull all through. Then I formed the intimacy of many illustrated papers which I did not buy, but studied on the strings where they hung stretched high over the counter. In one was the picture of a young lady habited in the mingled colors of Yale and Princeton, with a Cupid throwing a football at her heart. She was a great resource, and could not be stared out of countenance.

Besides, there was on a wire frame over the showcase a platter, of native decoration, representing the whole of Long Island in a railroad map. It was a strangely ugly object, like some sort of sad, dissected fish, but fascinating. The news-dealer and I had often discussed its price, and I had invariably refused it at $1.25, though it was originally put upon the market at $2.50.

After he had packed up his stock, I could hold out no longer. I looked about for him, and found him playing checkers with the ex-keeper of the refreshment-room. I asked him if that hideous platter had

now got down to a dollar, and he went and hunted it out of his stock. Upon inspection he seemed to discover that it was still $1.25. In a desperation I paid the money; and almost at the same moment the newsdealer's place knew him no more, and I remained with my platter for a memorial of one of the weirdest experiences of a life which has not been barren of weirdness.

X.

"You ought to have seen an old-time closing of this hotel," said the clerk one evening toward the last. He had by this time resumed in his own person almost as many functions as the ancient mariner of the Bab Ballad who had eaten the former survivors of the *Nancy* brig, and claimed to represent them all by virtue of his superior appetite and digestion. Our clerk was now cashier, postmaster, room-clerk, night-clerk, and day-clerk, with moments of bell-boy; he spoke with authority, and we listened with the respect due to his manifold quality.

"The guests," he continued, "would run down toward the end of August to about two hundred. Then notice would be put up in the office, 'The hotel will close to-morrow after breakfast.' The band would be still here, and the bell-boys all on duty; and the

night before, all the guests would gather in the office. The band would play, and the talking and laughing would go on all through the evening, like the height of the season, and perhaps there would be a little dancing. Everybody would say good-night, the same as ever, and as soon as breakfast was over in the morning you would see them streaming away to the train, till there wasn't a soul left in the house but clerks and the help. Then this stair carpet would come down with a run." He pointed to the wide stairway. "The rugs would come up all through the halls; the dining-room would be cleared before you could look, and all the chairs would be on the tables with their legs in the air. The help would come to the desk in a steady file, and get their money and go. Before noon the cleaners would have the whole house to themselves."

We owned that it must have been fine, that it was spectacular and impressive, even dramatic, but in our hearts we felt that there was a finer poetic quality in our closing, which was like one of the slow processes of nature, and emulated the pensive close of summer, when the leaves do not all fall in a night, or the flowers wither or the grass droop in a single day, but the trees slowly drop their crowns through many weeks,

and the successive frosts lay a chill touch on a blossom here, and a petal there, and the summer passes in a cuthanasy which suffers you to say at no given moment, "The summer is dead," till it has long been dead.

Several aspects of the elementally simple landscape about us seemed peculiarly to sympathize with the quiet passing of the life of the great hotel. There could be no change in the long, irregular, gray sand dunes before it, which dropped themselves in lumpish masses, like the stretched and twisted shape of some vast bisected serpent. The stiff grasses and arid weeds that clothed them thinly, like a growth of dreadful green hair, kept their rigidity and their color with a sort of terrestrial immortality, or rather of an imperishable lifelessness; but over them fluttered a multitude of butterflies, thick as the leaves of autumn, and of much the same ultimate color, like spirits already released to their palingenesis. Flights of others, of a gay white and yellow, like the innocent souls of little ones, haunted the leaf-plant beds before the hotel, or tried to make friends with the harsh little evergreens surviving the plantations of a more courageous period of the enterprise, and stolidly presenting a wood at the borders of the plank walks. To the landward the

mighty marshes stretched their innumerable acres to the sunrise and the sunset and the northern lights, one wash of pale yellow-green. Before we left, this began to be splashed as with flame or blood by the reddening of that certain small weed which loves the salt of tide-flooded meadows. The hollyhocklike bells of the marsh-roses drooped and fell, but other and gayer flowers, like ox-eye daisies of taller stem, came to replace them; and still, with the rising tide, the larger and the lesser craft that plied upon the many channels of the meadows blew softly back and forth, and seemed to sail upon their undulant grasses.

In all, the large leisure, the serene lapse of nature toward decay, seemed to express a consciousness of the hotel's unhurried dissolution, to wait gently upon it, and to stay in a faithful summer loveliness till the last light should be quenched, of all those that had made it flame like a jewel in the forehead of the sea, and that had faded from veranda and balcony to the glitter of the clustered lamps in the office and dining-room.

XI.

There came, indeed, about the middle of September, a sudden rude shock of cold, which seemed to express an impatience with the dying hotel, hitherto unknown

to the gently varying moods of nature. The wind blew for a day from the northwest, and stiffened its wasted and flaccid frame until one fancied its teeth chattering, as it were; but even then the sea did not share the harsh sentiment of the inland weather. It lay smiling as serenely as ever, and the fleet of fishing sloops and schooners that began to flock before our beach about the end of August rocked and tilted, like things in a dream, as they had for the last fortnight. It was said that one of them dragged her anchor and came ashore in the night, but this happened in the dark, and we knew of it only by hearsay, after she had got off and sailed away. A day later they were all there again, and some flew in close to the beach, and skimmed back and forth, as fearless of its ever-shifting sands as the fish-hawks that sailed the deeps of blue air above them.

The water remained as warm as ever; warmer, they said, who tried it in a bath. I did not. The next to the last time I bathed I had for sole companion a literary clergyman, with whom I walked down to the beach discussing the amusing aspects of the Ninth Crusade, which the Venetians so cannily turned aside from the conquest of the Holy Land to the conquest of Constantinople. The New York Dump was un-

pleasantly evident in the sea that day; and the last time the Dump had the sea all to itself. It is not agreeable to bathe among old brooms, bottles, decayed fruit, trunk lids, vegetable cans, broken boxes, and the other refuse of the ash-barrel, and I came out almost before the life-guard could get ready to throw me a life-preserver.

He was not the gaudy giant of bronze who posed between the life-lines at the height of the bathing-season, when twoscore spectators on the benches provided for them watched a half-dozen men and women weltering in the surf, or popping up and down after the manner of ladies taking a sea-bath. But I dare say he was quite as efficient, and as I had the good fortune to make his acquaintance, I liked him better. I specially liked his pelting about the bathing-pavilion before he went on duty with me, in his bare legs and feet, and wearing over his bathing-tights a cut-away coat, with a derby hat, to complete his ceremonial costume.

He was not so much in keeping with the inlander's ideal of bathing-beaches, where summer girls float in the waves or loll upon the sands in the flirtatious poses familiar to the observer of them in the illustrated papers. To guard these daring maids from the dangers

of the deep the gaudy bronze giant, with his yachting cap, his black jerseys, his white shoes, and his brown arms folded upon his breast, where they half revealed, half hid his label of Life-Guard, was a far fitter figure. But for the real bathers, I think the guard in the cut-away, derby, and bare feet was much more to be trusted; he was simple, substantial, and unpretentious; and surf-bathing, let me whisper in the innumerable ear of the inland myriads who have never seen it, is not often the gay frolic they have fancied: rather, it is sober, serious, sloppy.

XII.

At first the mental frame of us lingerers in the closing hotel was one of heroic self-applause. We wore a brave and smiling front; we said it was so much nicer than when the house was full, than when there were a thousand or even a hundred in it; and we all declared that we were going to stay as long as the landlord would let us. But from time to time there were defections; one table after another was dismantled; face after face vanished; first a white face, then a black face. I do not think we were so smiling after four of the beach trains were taken off; secretly, I think each of us wondered, What if we should stay till the last

train was taken off, and we could not get away! What should we do then?

We have become rather more serious; we do not talk trivially when we talk, and we scarcely talk at all; we have traversed each other's conversable territory so often that there is no longer the hope of discovery in it. We have not only become serious; I have reached the point where I have asked in thought if we are not a little absurd. Why should we stay? What is keeping us? The waves of autumn will soon reach the kitchen fires; and then?

Last night, our waiter said he was going on Monday. This morning the newsboy passed through the office on his way to serve the cottagers with the papers. Asked if he were not going to serve the hotel guests, he went on without answering. It may be because he is an officer of a railroad, whose officers reluctantly answer questions; but perhaps he has come to feel a ghostly quality in us, and regards us as so many simulacra incapable of interest in the affairs of real men.

The gas was not lighted in the ballroom after dinner yesterday; the halls gloomed like illimitable caverns late in the gathered dusk.

Shall I be able to stay till Friday? We shall see.

XIII.

A most resplendent Sunday is passing. The cold wind of last night has blown the whole world clean of clouds. One has a sense of the globe swinging in depths of translucent ether, stainless through all the reaches of space.

The sea is blue as the sky. It quivers where the sun slants upon it, and reflects the rays from myriad facets of steel. You cannot look at it long there, but now you begin to understand what Tennyson meant when he called it

"The million-spangled sapphire marriage-ring of the land."

All day yesterday, which was the great day for the arriving European steamers, they came hurrying in. We counted ten or twelve, each blocking the length of an express train out of the rim of the horizon. To-day there are none: only a few far-off full-sailed ships, and nearer shore the fleet of fishing sloops and schooners, tilting and swaying, and now and then flying in so close to the beach that we can see the men on board, and trailing their small boats through a drift of foamy sea.

There are twenty-three guests in the house now—the house that holds a thousand! Two hunters came down with their guns Friday night, and re-enforced

us. After breakfast a gay group gathered on the great midmost stairway of the veranda, and one of the men told the ladies stories and made them laugh. Every one is acquainted now, and speaks freely to every one else. It is rather weird. Should we be so civil if we were normally conditioned?

We have a very good two-o'clock dinner: the cook still remembers it is Sunday. After dinner two of us go down to the bathing-beach, and from the spectators' benches watch a soft-shell crab which has been bathing, and is now lying in the warm sand where the rising tide has flung him. We wait to see it reach him again, and draw him back, but it does not. It seems to me that he is unhappy in the sun, and I take a stick and tilt him into the sea. I do not know whether he likes that either; but he cannot help himself. He could not help himself in the sun.

XIV.

It is Monday morning now, and the world is wrapped in cold gray clouds, which seem to have meant something unpleasant to the fishing craft, for they have all vanished but two of the bolder sail. It rains a little and then stops. A wind, heavy with the salt breath of the sea, rises steadily, and bemoans itself in all the

angles and projections of the house. The lanterns of the veranda, which have not been lighted for a week, rattle dolefully in the blast. Under them, the long line of rocking-chairs in which a quarter of a mile of ladies used to sit and gossip together stretches emptily away. The wind pushes against the tall backs of the chairs, and they rock softly to and fro, as if the ghosts of the gossipers invisibly filled them, and still inaudibly babbled on. Where some of the chairs are grouped facing one another, the effect is very creepy. Will they keep up their spectral colloquies all winter?

I escape from this eery sight to my own room, and in the corridor, three uptown blocks away, I behold a small chambermaid balancing herself against a large bucket as she wavers slowly down. It is tragic.

The wind rises, and by mid-afternoon blows half a gale. The sea froths and roars and tumbles on the beach, and far out the serried breakers toss their white-caps against the sky-line, like so many cooks abandoning the hotel kitchen.

About three o'clock, the life-guard of the bathing-beach, having cast his derby and cut-away, appears with three other men in tights, and pulls in the life-lines and the buoys. Now the Dump will have the ocean for its own.

A stranded boat which lies on the beach to the northward came ashore in the gale last night from some of the fishermen. It is in good condition, and if the trains should stop running before noon to-morrow we can be taken off in it. Eighteen of our number went away this morning; and there are now but four of us left. We could easily get away in that boat.

XV.

The wind rose till nightfall, and then its passion broke in tears. A tempestuous night threatened; but the weather changed its mind as swiftly as a woman, and the day dawned as sweetly and softly this morning as a day of young June. The sea is again a shining level, veiled in a tender mist. Out of this the fishing sail come stealing silently one after another till again a fleet of them is tilting and swaying in front of the hotel. One large, goblin sail, which remained throughout the threats of the weather, looks like the picture of the goblin in the Bab Ballad which tries to frighten the image before the tobacconist's shop.

The gang of Italians who have toiled for three months to hide the infamies of the Dump, burying them in the sand as fast as the sea cast them ashore, are taking up the plank walks to the bathing-beach.

The season is over. The barrel, which formed the outermost buoy, swings monumentally (if monuments can swing) at anchor among the breakers.

At the station the railroad people have become unnaturally amiable. They call me by name; they take a personal interest in getting off my telegrams and express packages. In one of my visits to them, I meet the life-guard in full citizen's dress, with even shoes on. He salutes me, but I have to look twice before I know him.

XVI.

A generous contention has arisen between ourselves and the other remaining family as to which shall be last to leave the hotel. They go on the 10.25, and we have outstayed them! We are the last guests in the house. The landlord's Italian greyhound seems instinctively to feel our pathetic distinction. He rushes upon me from far down the veranda, and fawns upon me.

The cook and a last helper of some unknown function carry our trunks to the station. But it has now suddenly become a question whether we shall go on the 12.20 or wait for the 5.20. It depends finally upon our getting a last lunch at the restaurant of the bathing-beach. We ask, limiting our demands to a

clam chowder. We are answered that there are still clams, but the man who knows how to make chowder is gone. The restaurant family are going to lunch upon a ham bone, which is now being scraped for them. We refuse to share it with many thanks, and decide to go on the 12.20.

I have paid my last bill.

On the 10th of August a pomp of liveried menials met me as I alighted from the train, and contended for the honor and profit of carrying my umbrella into the hotel.

On the 17th of September I myself carry a heavy satchel in each hand out through the echoing corridors down the wide veranda stairs to the train, unattended by a single fee-taker.

The hotel is closed.

GLIMPSES OF CENTRAL PARK.

This morning, as I sat on a bench in one of the most frequented walks of Central Park, I could almost have touched the sparrows on the sprays about me; a squirrel, foraging for nuts, climbed on my knees, as if to explore my pockets. Of course, there is a policeman at every turn to see that no wrong is done these pretty creatures, and that no sort of trespass is committed by any in the domain of all; but I like to think that the security and immunity of the Park is proof of something besides the vigilance of its guardians; that it is a hint of a growing sense in Americans that what is common is the personal charge of every one in the community.

As I turn from my page and look out upon it, I see the domes and spires of its foliage beginning to feel the autumn and taking on the wonderful sunset tints of the year in its decline; when I stray through its pleasant paths, I feel the pathos of the tender October

air; but, better than these sensuous delights, in everything of it and in it, I imagine a prophecy of the truer state which I believe America is destined yet to see established. It cannot be that the countless thousands who continually visit it, and share equally in its beauty, can all come away insensible of the meaning of it; here and there some one must ask himself, and then ask others, why the whole of life should not be as generous and as just as this part of it; why he should not have a country as palpably his own as the Central Park is, where his ownership excludes the ownership of no other. Some workman out of work, as he trudges aimlessly through its paths must wonder why the city cannot minister to his need as well as his pleasure, and not hold aloof from him till he is thrown a pauper on its fitful charities. If it can give him this magnificent garden for his forced leisure, why cannot it give him a shop where he can go in extremity, to earn his bread?

I.

I may be mistaken. His thoughts may never take this turn at all. The poor are slaves of habit, they bear what they have borne, they suffer on from generation to generation, and seem to look for nothing

different. But this is what I think for poor people in the Park, not alone for the workman recently out of work, but for the workman so long out of it that he has rotted into one of the sodden tramps whom I meet now and then, looking like some forlorn wild beast, in the light of the autumnal leaves. That is the great trouble in New York; you cannot anywhere get away from the misery of life. You would think that the rich for their own sakes would wish to see conditions bettered, so that they might not be confronted at every turn by the mere loathliness of poverty. But they likewise are the slaves of habit, and go the way the rich have gone since the beginning of time. Sometimes I think that as Shakespeare says of the living and the dead, the rich and the poor are "but as pictures" to one another, without vital reality.

Sometimes I am glad to lose the sense of their reality, and this is why I would rather walk in the pathways of the Park than in the streets of the city, for the contrasts there are not so frequent, if they are glaring still. I do get away from them now and then, for a moment or two, and give myself wholly up to the delight of the place. It has been treated with the artistic sense which always finds its best expression in the service of the community, but I do not think we

generally understand this, the civic spirit is so weak in us yet; and I doubt if the artists themselves are conscious of it, they are so rarely given the chance to serve the community. When this chance offers, however, it finds the right man to profit by it, as in the system of parks at Chicago, the gardened spaces at Washington, and the Central Park in New York. Some of the decorative features here are bad, the sculpture is often foolish or worse, and the architecture is the outgrowth of a mood, where it is not merely puerile. The footways have been asphalted, and this is out of keeping with the rustic character of the place, but the whole design, and much of the detail in the treatment of the landscape, bears the stamp of a kindly and poetic genius. The Park is in no wise taken away from nature, but is rendered back to her, when all has been done to beautify it, an American woodland, breaking into meadows, here and there, and brightened with pools and ponds lurking among rude masses of rock, and gleaming between leafy knolls and grassy levels. It stretches and widens away, mile after mile, in the heart of the city, a memory of the land as it was before the havoc of the city began, and giving to the city-prisoned poor an image of what the free country still is, everywhere. It is all penetrated by well-

kept drives and paths; and it is in these paths that I find my pleasure. They are very simple woodland paths, but for the asphalt; though here and there an effeet of art is studied with eharming felieity; and I like to mount some steps graded in the roek at one plaee and eome upon a plinth supporting the bust of a poet, as I might in an old Italian garden. But there is otherwise very little effeet of gardening exeept near the large fountain by the principal lake where there is some flare of flowers on the sloping lawns. There is an exeess in the viaduet, with its sweeping stairways, and carven freestone massiveness; but it is charming in a way, too, and the basin of the fountain is full of lotuses and papyrus reeds, so that you do not mueh notiee the bronze angel atop, who seems to be holding her skirt to one side and pieking her steps, and to be rather afraid of falling iuto the water. There is, in faet, only one thoroughly good piece of seulpture in the Park, whieh I am glad to find in sympathy with the primeval suggestiveness of the landseape gardening: an Ameriean Indian hunting with his dog, as the Indians must have hunted through the wilds here before the white men came.

II.

This group is always a great pleasure to me, from whatever point I come upon it, or catch a glimpse of it; and I like to go and find the dog's prototype in the wolves at the menageric which the city offers free to the wonder of the crowds constantly thronging its grounds and houses. The captive brutes seem to be of that solidarity of good-fellowship which unites all the frequenters of the Park; the tigers and the stupidly majestic lions have an air different to me from tigers and lions shown for profit. Among the milder sorts, I do not care so much for the wallowing hippopotamuses, and the lumbering elephants, and the supercilious camels which one sees in menageries everywhere, as for those types which represent a period as extinct as that of the American pioneers; I have rather a preference for going and musing upon the ragged bison pair as they stand with their livid mouths open at the pale of their paddock, expecting the children's peanuts, and unconscious of their importance as survivors of the untold millions of their kind which a quarter of a century ago blackened the Western plains for miles and miles. There are now only some forty or fifty left; for of all the forces of our plutocratic conditions, so few are conservative that the American

buffalo is as rare as the old-fashioned American mechanic, proud of his independence, and glorying in his citizenship.

In some other enclosures are pairs of beautiful deer, which I wish might be enlarged to the whole extent of the Park. But I can only imagine them on the great sweeps of grass, which recall the savannahs and prairies, though there is a very satisfactory flock of sheep which nibbles the herbage there, when these spaces are not thrown open to the ball-players who are allowed on certain days of the week. I like to watch them, and so do great numbers of other frequenters of the Park, apparently; and when I have walked far up beyond the reservoirs of city-water, which serve the purpose of natural lakes in the landscape, I like to come upon that expanse in the heart of the woods where the tennis-players have stretched their nets over a score of courts, and the art students have set up their easels on the edges of the lawns, for what effect of the autumnal foliage they have the luck or the skill to get. It is all very sweet and friendly, and in keeping with the purpose of the Park, and its frank and simple treatment throughout.

III.

I think this treatment is best for the greatest number of those who visit the place, and for whom the aspect of simple nature is the thing to be desired. Their pleasure in it, as far as the children are concerned, is visible and audible enough, but I like, as I stroll along, to note the quiet comfort which the elder people take in this domain of theirs, as they sit on the benches in the woodland ways, or under the arching trees of the Mall, unmolested by the company of some of the worst of all the bad statues in the world. They are mostly foreigners, I believe, but I find every now and then an American among them, who has released himself, or has been forced by want of work, to share their leisure for the time; I fancy he has always a bad conscience, if he is taking the time off, from the continual pressure of our duty to add dollar to dollar, and provide for the future as well as the present need. The foreigner, who has been bred up without the American's hope of advancement, has not his anxiety, and is a happier man, so far as that goes; but the Park imparts something of its peace to every one, even to some of the people who drive, and form a spectacle for those who walk.

For me they all unite to form a spectacle I never

cease to marvel at, with a perpetual hunger of conjecture as to what they really think of one another. Apparently, they are all, whether they walk or whether they drive, willing collectively, if not individually, to go on forever in the economy which perpetuates their inequality, and makes a mock of the polity which assures them their liberty. The difference which money creates among men is always preposterous, and whenever I take my eyes from it the thing ceases to be credible; yet this difference is what the vast majority of Americans have agreed to accept forever as right and justice. If I were to go and sit beside some poor man in the Park, and ask him why a man no better than he was driving before him in a luxurious carriage, he would say that the other man had the money to do it; and he would really think he had given me a reason; the man in the carriage himself could not regard the answer as more full and final than the man on the bench. They have both been reared in the belief that it is a sufficient answer, and they would both regard me with the same misgiving if I ventured to say that it was not a reason; for if their positions were to be at once reversed, they would both acquiesce in the moral outlawry of their inequality. The man on foot would think it had simply come his

turn to drive in a carriage, and the man whom he ousted would think it was rather hard luck, but he would realize that it was what, at the bottom of his heart, he had always expected.

Only once have I happened to find any one who questioned the situation from a standpoint outside of it, and that was a shabbily dressed man whom I overheard talking to a poor woman in one of those pleasant arbors which crown certain points of rising ground in the Park. She had a paper bundle on the seat beside her, and she looked like some working-woman out of place, with that hapless, wistful air which such people often have. Her poor little hands, which lay in her lap, were stiffened and hardened with work, but they were clean, except for the black of the nails, and she was very decently clad in garments beginning to fray into rags; she had a good, kind, faithful face, and she listened without rancor to the man as he unfolded the truth to her concerning the conditions in which they lived. It was the wisdom of the poor, hopeless, joyless, as it now and then makes itself heard in the process of the years and ages, and then sinks again into silence. He showed her how she had no permanent place in the economy, not because she had momentarily lost work, but because in

the nature of things as we have them, it could only be a question of time when she must be thrown out of any place she found. He blamed no one; he only blamed the conditions. I doubt whether his wisdom made the friendless woman happier, but I could not have gainsaid it, when he saw me listening, if he had asked, "Isn't that the truth?" I left him talking sadly on, and I never saw him again. He was threadbare, but he too was cleanly and decent in his dress, and not at all of that type of agitators of whom we have made an effigy like nothing I have seen, as if merely for the childish pleasure of reviling it.

IV.

The whole incident was infinitely pathetic to me; and yet we must not romance the poor, or imagine that they are morally better than the rich; we must not fancy that a poor man, when he ceases to be a poor man, would be kinder for having been poor. He would perhaps oftener, and certainly more logically, be unkinder, for there would be mixed with his vanity of possession a quality of cruel fear, an apprehension of loss, which the man who had always been rich would not feel. The self-made man when he has made himself of money, seems to have been deformed by

his original destitution, and I think that if I were in need I would rather take my chance of pity from the man who had never been poor. Of course, this is generalization, and there are instances to the contrary, which at once occur to me. But what is absolutely true is that our prosperity, the selfish joy of having, at the necessary cost of those who cannot have, is blighted by the feeling of insecurity which every man has in his secret soul, and which the man who has known want must have in greater measure than the man who has never known want.

There is, indeed, no security for wealth, which we think the chief good of life, in the system that warrants it. When a man has gathered his millions, he cannot be reduced to want, probably; but while he is amassing them, while he is in the midst of the fight, or the game, as most men are, there are ninety-five chances out of a hundred that he will be beaten. Perhaps it is best so, and I should be glad it was so if I could be sure that the common danger bred a common kindness between the rich and the poor, but it seems not to do so. As far as I can see, the rule of chance, which they all live under, does nothing more than reduce them to a community of anxieties.

To the eye of the observer they have the monotony

of the sea, where some tenth wave runs a little higher than the rest, but sinks at last, or breaks upon the rocks or sands, as inevitably as the other nine. Our inequality is without picturesqueness and without distinction. The people in the carriages are better dressed than those on foot, especially the women; but otherwise they do not greatly differ from the most of these. The spectacle of the driving in the Park has none of that dignity which characterizes such spectacles in European capitals. This may be because many people of the finest social quality are seldom seen there, or it may be because the differences growing out of money can never have the effect of those growing out of birth; that a plutocracy can never have the last wicked grace of an aristocracy. It would be impossible for instance, to weave any romance about the figures you see in our carriages; they do not even suggest the poetry of ages of prescriptive wrong; they are of to-day, and there is no guessing whether they will be of to-morrow or not.

In Europe, this sort of tragi-comedy is at least well played; but in America, you always have the feeling that the performance is that of second-rate amateurs, who, if they would really live out the life implied by America, would be the superiors of the whole world.

I am moved to laughter by some of the things I see among them, when perhaps I ought to be awed, as, for instance, by the sight of a little, lavishly dressed lady, lolling in the corner of a ponderous landau, with the effect of holding fast lest she should be shaken out of it, while two powerful horses, in jingling, silver-plated harness, with due equipment of coachman and footman, seated on their bright-buttoned overcoats on the box together, get her majestically over the ground at a slow trot. This is what I sometimes see, with not so much reverence as I feel for the simple mother pushing her baby-carriage on the asphalt beside me and doubtless envying the wonderful creature in the landau. Sometimes it is a fat old man in the landau; or a husband and wife, not speaking; or a pair of grim old ladies, who look as if they had lived so long aloof from their unluckier sisters that they could not be too severe with the mere sight of them. Generally speaking, the people in the carriages do not seem any happier for being there, though I have sometimes seen a jolly party of strangers in a public carriage, drawn by those broken-kneed horses which seem peculiarly devoted to this service.

The best place to see the driving is at a point where the different driveways converge, not far from the

Egyptian obelisk which the Khedive gave us some years ago, and which we have set up here in one of the finest eminences of the Park. He had of course no moral right to rob his miserable land of any one of its characteristic monuments, but I do not know that it is not as well in New York as in Alexandria. If its heart of aged stone could feel the continuity of conditions, it must be aware of the essential unity of the civilizations beside the Nile and beside the Hudson; and if Cleopatra's needle had really an eye to see, it must perceive that there is nothing truly civic in either. As the tide of dissatisfied and weary wealth rolls by its base here, in the fantastic variety of its equipages, does the needle discern so much difference between their occupants and the occupants of the chariots that swept beneath it in the capital of the Ptolemies two thousand years ago? I can imagine it at times winking such an eye and cocking in derision the gilded cap with which the New-Yorkers have lately crowned it. They pass it in all kinds of vehicles, and there are all kinds of people in them, though there are sometimes no people at all, as when the servants have been sent out to exercise the horses, for nobody's good or pleasure, and in the spirit of that atrocious waste which runs through our whole life. I

have now and then seen a gentleman driving a four-in-hand, with everything to minister to his vanity in the exact imitation of a nobleman driving a four-in-hand over English roads, and with no one to be drawn by his crop-tailed bays or blacks except himself and the solemn groom on his perch; I have wondered how much more nearly equal they were in their aspirations and instincts than either of them imagined. A gentleman driving a pair, abreast or tandem, with a groom on the rumble, for no purpose except to express his quality, is a common sight enough; and sometimes you see a lady illustrating her consequence in like manner. A lady driving, while a gentleman occupies the seat behind her, is a sight which always affects me like the sight of a man taking a woman's arm, in walking, as the man of an underbred sort is apt to do.

Horsey-looking women, who are, to ladies at least, what horsey-looking men are to gentlemen, drive together; often they are really ladies, and sometimes they are nice young girls, out for an innocent dash and chat. They are all very much and very unimpressively dressed, whether they sit in state behind the regulation coachman and footman, or handle the reins themselves. Now and then you see a lady with a dog on the seat beside her, for an airing, but not

often a child; once or twice I have seen one with a large spaniel seated comfortably in front of her, and I have asked myself what would happen if, instead of the dog, she had taken into her carriage some pale woman or weary old man, such as I sometimes see gazing patiently after her. But the thing would be altogether impossible. I should be the first to feel the want of keeping in it; for, however recent wealth may be here, it has equipped itself with all the apparatus of long-inherited riches, which it is as strongly bound to maintain intact as if it were really old and hereditary—perhaps more strongly. I must say that, mostly, its owners look very tired of it, or of something, in public, and that our American plutocrats, if they have not the distinction of an aristocracy, have at least the ennui.

V.

But these stylish turnouts form only a part of the spectacle in the Park driveways, though they form, perhaps, the larger part. Bicyclers weave their dangerous and devious way everywhere through the roads, and seem to be forbidden the bridle-paths, where from point to point you catch a glimpse of the riders. There are boys and girls in village carts, the

happiest of all the people you see; and there are cheap-looking buggies, like those you meet in the country, with each a young man and young girl in them, as if they had come in from some remote suburb; turnouts shabbier yet, with poor old horses, poke about with some elderly pair, like a farmer and his wife. There are family carryalls, with friendly-looking families, old and young, getting the good of the Park together in a long, leisurely jog; and open buggies with yellow wheels and raffish men in them behind their widespread trotters; or with some sharp-faced young fellow getting all the speed out of a lively span that the mounted policemen, stationed at intervals along the driveways, will allow. The finer vehicles are of all types, patterned like everything else that is fine in America, upon something fine in Europe; but just now a very high-backed phaeton appears to be most in favor; and in fact I get a great deal of pleasure out of these myself, as I do not have to sit stiffly up in them. They make me think somehow of those eighteenth-century English novels, of the times when young ladies like Evelina drove out in phaetons, and were the passionate pursuit of Lord Orvilles and Sir Clement Willoughbys.

How far do the New Yorkers publicly carry their

travesty of the European aristocratic life? I should say, from what I have seen of the driving in the Park, it does not err on the side of excess. The equipages, when they are fine, are rather simple; and the liveries are such as express a proprietary grandeur in coat-buttons, silver or gilt, and in a darker or lighter drab of the cloth the servants wear; they are often in brown or dark green. Now and then you see the tightly eased legs and top-boots and cockaded hat of a groom, but this is oftenest on a four-in-hand coach, or the rumble of a tandem cart; the soul of the free-born republican is rarely bowed before it on the box of a family carriage. I have seen nothing like an attempt at family colors in the trappings of the coachman and horses.

I should say that the imitation was quite within the bounds of good taste. The bad taste is in the wish to imitate Europe at all; but with the abundance of money, the imitation is simply inevitable. There is no American life for wealth; there is no native formula for the expression of social superiority; because America means equality if it means anything, in the last analysis. But in all this show on the Park driveways, you get no effect so vivid as the effect of sterility in that liberty without equality which seems

to satisfy us Americans. A man may come into the Park with any sort of vehicle, so that it is not for the carriage of merchandise, and he is free to spoil what might be a fine effect with the intrusion of whatever squalor of turnout he will. He has as much right there as any one, but the right to be shabby in the presence of people who are fine is not one that I should envy him. I do not think that he can be comfortable in it, for the superiority around him puts him to shame, as it puts the poor man to shame at every turn in life, though some people, with an impudence that is pitiable, will tell you that it does not put him to shame; that he feels himself as good as any one. We are always talking about human nature and what it is, and what it is not; but we try in our blind worship of inequality to refuse the first and simplest knowledge of human nature, which testifies of itself in every throb of our own hearts, as we try even to refuse a knowledge of the Divine nature, and attribute to the Father of all a design in the injustice we have ourselves created.

To me the lesson of Central Park is that where it is used in the spirit of fraternity and equality, the pleasure in it is pure and fine, and that its frequenters have for the moment a hint of the beauty which might be

perpetually in their lives; but where it is invaded by the motives of the strife that raves all round it in the city outside, its joys are fouled with contempt and envy, the worst passions that tear the human heart. Ninety-nine Americans out of a hundred, have never seen a man in livery; they have never dreamed of such a display as this in the Park. Yet with our conditions, I fear that at sight of it ninety-nine Americans out of every hundred would lust for their turn of the wheel, their throw of the dice, so that they might succeed to a place in it, and flaunt their luxury in the face of poverty, and abash humility with their pride.

NEW YORK STREETS.

If the reader will look at a plan of New York, he will see that Central Park is really in the centre of the place, if a thing which has length only, or is so nearly without breadth or thickness, can be said to have a centre. South of the Park, the whole island is dense with life and business; it is pretty solidly built up on either side; but to the northward the blocks of houses are no longer of a compact succession; they struggle up, at irregular intervals, from open fields, and sink again, on the streets pushed beyond them into the simple country, where even a suburban character is lost. It can only be a few years, at most, before all the empty spaces will be occupied, and the town, such as it is, and such as it seems to have been ever since the colonial period, will have anchored itself fast in the rock that underlies the larger half of it, and imparted its peculiar effect to every street—an effect of arrogant untidiness, of superficial and formal gentility, of immediate neglect and overuse.

I.

You will see more of the neglect and overuse in the avenues which penetrate the city's mass from north to south, and more of the superficial and formal gentility in the streets that cross these avenues from east to west; but the arrogant untidiness you will find nearly everywhere, except in some of the newest quarters westward from the Park, and still farther uptown. These are really very clean; but they have a bare look, as if they were not yet inhabited, and, in fact, many of the houses are still empty. Lower down, the streets are often as shabby and as squalid as the avenues that run parallel with the river-sides; and at least two of the avenues are as decent as the decentest cross-streets.

Of late, a good many streets and several avenues have been asphalted, and the din of wheels on the rough pavement no longer torments the ear so cruelly; but there is still the sharp clatter of the horses' shoes everywhere; and their pulverized manure, which forms so great a part of the city's dust, and is constantly taken into people's stomachs and lungs, seems to blow more freely about on the asphalt than on the old-fashioned pavements. A few years ago scraps of paper, straw, fruit-peel, and all manner of minor waste and rubbish, littered all the thoroughfares; under a

reform administration this has been amended; but no one knows how long a reform will last in New York.

When I leave Central Park, where I like best to walk, I usually take one of the avenues southward, and then turn eastward or westward on one of the cross-streets whose perspective appeals to my curiosity, and stroll through it to one of the rivers. The avenues are fifteen or sixteen in number, and they stretch, some farther than others, up and down the island, but most of them end in the old town, where its irregularity begins, at the south, and several are interrupted by the different parks at the north. Together with the streets that intersect them between the old town and Central Park, they form one of the most characteristic parts of modern New York. Like the streets, they are numbered, rather than named, from a want of imagination, or from a preference of mere convenience to the poetry and associations that cluster about a name, and can never cling to a number, or from a business impatience to be quickly done with the matter. This must rather defeat itself, however, when a hurried man undertakes to tell you that he lives at three hundred and seventy-five on One Hundred and Fifty-seventh street. Toward the rivers the avenues grow shabbier and shabbier, though this statement must be qualified, like all gen-

eral statements. Seventh Avenue, on the west, is pleasanter than Sixth Avenue; and Second Avenue, on the east, is more agreeable than Third Avenue. In fact, the other afternoon, as I strayed over to the East River, I found several blocks of Avenue A, which runs nearest it, very quiet, built up with comfortable dwellings, and even clean, as cleanliness is understood in New York.

But it is Fifth Avenue which divides the city lengthwise nearest the middle, and it is this avenue which affords the norm of style and comfort to the other avenues on either hand, and to all the streets that intersect it. Madison Avenue is its rival, and has suffered less from the invasion of shops and hotels, but a long stretch of Fifth Avenue is still the most aristocratic quarter of the city, and is upon the whole its finest thoroughfare. I do not think any New York street fine; but, generally, Fifth Avenue and the cross-streets in its better part have a certain regularity in their mansions of brownstone, which give something of the pleasure one gets from symmetry. They are at least not so chaotic as they might be; though they always suggest money more than taste, I cannot at certain moments, and under the favor of an evening sky, deny them a sort of unlovely and forbidding

beauty. There are not many of these cross-streets which have remained intact from the business of the other avenues. They have always a drinking-saloon or a provision-store or an apothecary's shop at the corners where they intersect; the modistes find lodgment in them almost before the residents are aware. Beyond Sixth Avenue, or Seventh at farthest, on the west, and Fourth Avenue or Lexington, on the east, they lose their genteel character; their dwellings degenerate into apartment-houses, and then into tenement-houses of lower and lower grade till the rude traffic and the offensive industries of the river shores are reached.

But once more I must hedge, for sometimes a street is respectable almost to the water on one side or the other; and there are whole neighborhoods of pleasant dwellings far down-town, which seem to have been forgotten by the enterprise of business, or neglected by its caprice, and to have escaped for a time at least the contagion of poverty. Business and poverty are everywhere slowly or swiftly eating their way into the haunts of respectability, and destroying its pleasant homes. They already have the whole of the old town to themselves. In large spaces of it no one dwells but the janitors with their families, who keep the sky-scraping edifices where business frets the time

away; and by night in the streets where myriads throng by day, no one walks but the outcast and the watch.

Many of these business streets are the handsomest in the city, with a good sky line, and an architectural ideal too good for the uses of commerce. This is often realized in antipathetic iron, but often there is good honest work in stone, and an effect better than the best of Fifth Avenue. But this is stupid and wasteful; it is for the pleasure of no one's taste or sense; the business men who traffic in these edifices have no time for their beauty, or no perception of it; the porters and truckmen and expressmen, who toil and moil in these thoroughfares, have no use for the grandeur that catches the eye of a chance passer.

Other spaces are abandoned to the poverty which festers in the squalid houses and swarms day and night in the squalid streets; but business presses closer and harder upon the refuges of its foster-child, not to say its offspring, and it is only a question of time before it shall wholly possess them. It is only a question of time before all the comfortable quarters of the city, northward from the old town to the Park, shall be invaded, and the people driven to the streets building up on the west and east of it for a little longer sojourn. Where their last stay shall be, Heaven

knows; perhaps they will be forced into the country.

In this sort of invasion, however, it is poverty that seems mostly to come first, and it is business that follows and holds the conquest, though this is far from being always the case. Whether it is so or not, however, poverty is certain at some time to impart its taint; for it is perpetual here, from generation to generation, like death itself. In our conditions, poverty is incurable; the very hope of cure is laughed to scorn by those who cling the closest to these conditions; it may be better at one time, and worse at another; but it must always be, somehow, till time shall be no more. It is from everlasting to everlasting.

II.

When I come home from these walks of mine, I have a vision of the wretched quarters through which I have passed, as blotches of disease upon the civic body, as loathsome sores, destined to eat deeper and deeper into it; and I am haunted by this sense of them, until I plunge deep into the Park, and wash my consciousness clean of it all for a while. But when I am actually in these leprous spots, I become hardened, for the moment, to the deeply underlying fact of human discomfort. I feel their picturesqueness, with a

callous indifference to that ruin, or that defect, which must so largely constitute the charm of the picturesque. A street of tenement-houses is always more picturesque than a street of brownstone residences, which the same thoroughfare usually is before it slopes to either river. The fronts of the edifices are decorated with the iron balconies and ladders of the fire-escapes, and have in the perspective a false air of gayety, which is travestied in their rear by the lines thickly woven from the windows to the tall poles set between the backs of the houses, and fluttering with drying clothes as with banners.

The sidewalks swarm with children, and the air rings with their clamor, as they fly back and forth at play; on the thresholds, the mothers sit nursing their babes, and the old women gossip together; young girls lean from the casements, alow and aloft, or flirt from the doorways with the hucksters who leave their carts in the street, while they come forward with some bargain in fruit or vegetables, and then resume their leisurely progress and their jarring cries. The place has all the attraction of close neighborhood, which the poor love, and which affords them for nothing the spectacle of the human drama, with themselves for actors. In a picture it would be most pleasingly effective,

for then you could be in it, and yet have the distance on it which it needs. But to be in it, and not have the distance, is to inhale the stenches of the neglected street, and to catch that yet fouler and dreadfuller poverty-smell which breathes from the open doorways. It is to see the children quarrelling in their games, and beating each other in the face, and rolling each other in the gutter, like the little savage outlaws they are. It is to see the work-worn look of the mothers, the squalor of the babes, the haggish ugliness of the old women, the slovenly frowziness of the young girls. All this makes you hasten your pace down to the river, where the tall buildings break and dwindle into stables and shanties of wood, and finally end in the piers, commanding the whole stretch of the mighty waterway with its shipping, and the wooded heights of its western bank.

I am supposing you to have walked down a street of tenement-houses to the North river, as the New-Yorkers call the Hudson; and I wish I could give some notion of the beauty and majesty of the stream, some sense of the mean and ignoble effect of the city's invasion of the hither shore. The ugliness is, indeed, only worse in degree, but not in kind, than that of all city water-fronts. Instead of pleasant homes, with

green lawns and orchards sloping to the brink, huge factories and foundries, lumber yards, breweries, slaughter-houses, and warehouses, abruptly interspersed with stables and hovels and drinking-saloons, disfigure the shore, and in the nearest avenue the freight trains come and go on lines of railroads, in all the middle portion of New York. South of it, in the business section, the poverty section, the river region is a mere chaos of industrial and commercial strife and pauper wretchedness. North of it there are gardened driveways following the shore; and even at many points between, when you finally reach the river, there is a kind of peace, or at least a truce to the frantic activities of business. To be sure, the heavy trucks grind up and down the long piers, but on either side the docks are full of leisurely canal-boats, and if you could come with me in the late afternoon, you would see the smoke curling upward from their cabin roofs, as from the chimneys of so many rustic cottages, and smell the evening meal cooking within, while the canal-wives lounged at the gangway hatches for a breath of the sunset air, and the boatmen smoked on the gunwales or indolently plied the long sweeps of their pumps. All the hurry and turmoil of the city is lost among these people, whose clumsy craft recall the grassy in-

land levels remote from the metropolis, and the slow movement of life in the quiet country ways. Some of the mothers from the tenement-houses stroll down on the piers with their babies in their arms, and watch their men-kind, of all ages, fishing along the sides of the dock, or casting their lines far out into the current at the end. They do not seem to catch many fish, and never large ones, but they silently enjoy the sport, which they probably find leisure for in the general want of work in these hard times; if they swear a little at their luck, now and then, it is, perhaps, no more than their luck deserves. Some do not even fish, but sit with their legs dangling over the water, and watch the swift tugs, or the lagging sloops that pass, with now and then a larger sail, or a towering passenger steamboat. Far down the stream they can see the forests of masts, fringing either shore, and following the point of the island round and up into the great channel called the East River. These vessels seem as multitudinous as the houses that spread everywhere from them over the shore farther than the eye can reach. They bring the commerce of the world to this mighty city, which, with all its riches, is the parent of such misery, and with all its traffic abounds in idle men who cannot find work. The ships look happy

and free, in the stream, but they are of the overworked world, too, as well as the houses; and let them spread their wings ever so widely, they still bear with them the sorrows of the poor.

III.

The other evening I walked over to the East River through one of the tenement streets, and I reached the waterside just as the soft night was beginning to fall in all its autumnal beauty. The afterglow died from the river, while I hung upon a parapet over a gulf ravined out of the bank for a street, and experienced that artistic delight which cultivated people are often proud of feeling, in the aspect of the long prison island which breaks the expanse of the channel. I knew the buildings on it were prisons, and that the men and women in them, bad before, could only come out of them worse than before, and doomed to a life of outlawry and of crime. I was aware that they were each an image of that loveless and hopeless perdition which men once imagined that God had prepared for the souls of the damned, but I could not see the barred windows of those hells in the waning light. I could only see the trees along their walks; their dim lawns and gardens, and the castellated forms of the prisons;

and the æsthetic sense, which is careful to keep itself pure from pity, was tickled with an agreeable impression of something old and fair. The dusk thickened, and the vast steamboats which ply between the city and the New England ports on Long Island Sound, and daily convey whole populations of passengers between New York and Boston, began to sweep by silently, swiftly, luminous masses on the black water. Their lights aloft at bow and stern, floated with them like lambent planets; the lights of lesser craft dipped by, and came and went in the distance; the lamps of the nearer and farther shores twinkled into sight, and a peace that ignored all the misery of it, fell upon the scene.

IV.

The greatest problem of this metropolis is not how best to be in this place or that, but how fastest to go from one to the other, and the New-Yorkers have made guesses at the riddle, bad and worse, on each of the avenues, which, in their character of mere roadways, look as if the different car-tracks had been in them first, and the buildings, high and low, had chanced along their sides afterward. This is not the fact, of course, and it is not so much the effect on Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue, and Lexington

Avenue, which are streets of dwellings, solidly built up, like the cross streets. But it is undoubtedly the effect on all the other avenues, in great part of their extent. They vary but little in appearance otherwise, from east to west, except so far as the elevated railroads disfigure them, if thoroughfares so shabby and repulsive as they mostly are, can be said to be disfigured, and not beautified by whatever can be done to hide any part of their ugliness. Where this is left to make its full impression upon the spectators, there are lines of horse-cars perpetually jingling up and down, except on Fifth Avenue, where they have stages, as the New-Yorkers call the unwieldy and unsightly vehicles that ply there, and Lexington Avenue, where they have the cable cars. But the horse-cars run even under the elevated tracks, and no experience of noise can enable you to conceive of the furious din that bursts upon the sense, when at some corner two cars encounter on the parallel tracks below, while two trains roar and shriek and hiss on the rails overhead, and a turmoil of rattling express wagons, heavy drays and trucks, and carts, hacks, carriages, and huge vans rolls itself between and beneath the prime agents of the uproar. The noise is not only deafening, it is bewildering; you cannot know which side the danger threatens most,

and you literally take your life in your hand when you cross in the midst of it. Broadway, which traverses the district I am thinking of, in a diagonal line till it loses its distinctive character beyond the Park, is the course of the cable cars running with a silent speed that is more dangerous even than the tumultuous rush on the avenues. Now and then the apparatus for gripping the chain will not release it, and then the car rushes wildly over the track, running amuck through everything in its way, and spreading terror on every hand. When under control the long saloons advance swiftly, from either direction, at intervals of half a minute, with a monotonous alarum of their gongs, and the foot-passenger has to look well to his way if he ventures across the track, lest in avoiding one car another roll him under its wheels.

Apparently, the danger is guarded as well as it can be, and it has simply to be taken into the account of life in New York, for it cannot be abated, and no one is to be blamed for what is the fault of every one. It is true that there ought not, perhaps, to be any track in such a thoroughfare, but it would be hard to prove that people could get on without it, as they did before the theft of the street for the original horse-car track. Perhaps it was not a theft; but at all events, and at

the best, the street was given away by the city to an adventurer who wished to lay the tracks in it for his private gain, and none of the property owners along the line could help themselves. There is nothing that Americans hold so dear, or count so sacred, as private property; life and limb are cheap in comparison; but private enterprise is allowed to violate the rights of private property, from time to time here, in the most dramatic way.

The street-car company which took possession of Broadway never paid the abutters anything, I believe; and the elevated railroad companies are still resisting payment of damages on the four avenues which they occupied for their way up and down the city without offering compensation to the property owners along their route. If the community had built these roads, it would have indemnified every one, for the community is always just when it is the expression of the common honesty; and if it is ever unjust, it is because the uncommon dishonesty has contrived to corrupt it.

The elevated roads and the cable road had no right to be, on the terms that the New-Yorkers have them, but they are by far the best means of transit in the city, and I must say that, if they were not abuses, they would offer great comfort and great facility to the

public. This is especially true of the elevated roads, which, when you can put their moral offense out of your mind, are always delightful in their ease and airy swiftness. You fly smoothly along between the second and third story windows of the houses, which are shops below and dwellings above, on the avenues. The stations, though they have the prevailing effect of overuse, and look dirty and unkempt, are rather pretty in themselves; and you reach them, at frequent intervals, by flights of not ungraceful iron steps. The elevated roads are always picturesque, with here and there a sweeping curve that might almost be called beautiful.

They darken the avenues, of course, and fill them with an abominable uproar. Yet traffic goes on underneath, and life goes on alongside and overhead, and the city has adjusted itself to them, as a man adjusts himself to a chronic disease. I do not know whether they add to the foulness of the streets they pass through or not; I hardly think they do. The mud lies longer, after a rain, in the interminable tunnels which they form over the horse-car tracks in the middle of the avenues, and which you can look through for miles; but the mud does not blow into your nose and mouth as the dust does, and that is, so far, a positive advantage. A negative advantage, which I

have hinted, is that they hide so much of the street from sight, and keep you from seeing all its shabbiness, pitilessly open to the eye in the avenues which have only horse-car tracks in them. In fact, now that the elevated railroads are built, and the wrong they have done to persons is mainly past recall, perhaps the worst that can be said of them is that they do not serve their purpose. Of course, in our conditions, where ten men are always doing the work of one man in rivalry with each other, the passage of people to and from business is enormous: the passage of men to get money and the passage of women to spend it; and at the hours of the morning and the afternoon when the volume of travel is the greatest, the trains of the elevated roads offer a spectacle that is really incredible.

Every seat in them is taken, and every foot of space in the aisles between the seats is held by people standing, and swaying miserably to and fro by the leather straps dangling from the roofs. Men and women are indecently crushed together, without regard for that personal dignity which we seem to know nothing of and care nothing for. The multitude overflows from the car, at either end, and the passengers are as tightly wedged on the platform without as they are within. The long trains follow each other at intervals of two

or three minutes, and at each station they make a stop of but a few seconds, when those who wish to alight fight their way through the struggling mass. Those who wish to mount fight their way into the car or on to the platform, where the guard slams an iron gate against the stomachs and in the faces of those arriving too late. Sometimes horrible accidents happen; a man clinging to the outside of the gate has the life crushed out of his body against the posts of the station as the train pulls out. But in this land, where people have such a dread of civic collectivism of any kind, lest individuality should suffer, the individual is practically nothing in the regard of the corporate collectivities which abound.

V.

It is not only the corporations which outrage personal rights; where there is a question of interest, there seems to be no question of rights between individuals. They prey upon one another and seize advantages by force and by fraud in too many ways for me to hope to make the whole situation evident. The avenues to the eastward and westward have not grown up solidly and continuously in obedience to any law of order, or in pursuance of any meditated design.

They have been pushed along given lines, in fragments, as builders saw their interest in offering buyers a house or a row of houses, or as they could glut or trick the greed of land-owners clinging to their land, and counting upon some need of it, in the hope of extorting an unearned profit from it. In one place you will see a vast and lofty edifice, of brick or stone, and on each side of it or in front of it a structure one fourth as high, or a row of scurvy hovels, left there till a purchaser comes, not to pay the honest worth of the land for it, but to yield the price the owner wants. In other places you see long stretches of high board fence, shutting in vacant lots, often the best lots on the street, which the landlord holds for the rise destined to accrue to him from the building all round and beyond his property. In the meantime he pays a low tax on his land compared with the tax which the improved property pays, and gets some meager return for the use of his fence by the Italian fruiterers who build their stalls into it, and by the bill-posters who cover it with a medley of theatrical announcements, picturing the scenes of the different plays and the persons of the players. There are many things which unite to render the avenues unseemly and unsightly, such as the apparently desperate tastelessness and the

apparently instinctive uncleanliness of the New-Yorkers. But as I stand at some point commanding a long stretch of one of their tiresome perspectives, which is architecturally like nothing so much as a horse's jaw-bone, with the teeth broken or dislodged at intervals, I can blame nothing so much for the hideous effect as the rapacity of the land-owner holding on for a rise, as it is called. It is he who most spoils the sky-line, and keeps the street, mean and poor at the best in design, a defeated purpose, and a chaos come again.

Even when the owners begin to build, to improve their real estate, as the phrase is, it is without regard to the rights of their neighbors, or the feelings or tastes of the public, so far as the public may be supposed to have any. This is not true of the shabbier avenues alone, but of the finest, and of all the streets. If you will look, for instance, at the street facing the southern limit of the Park, you will get some notion of what I mean, and I hope you will be willing to suffer by a little study of it. At the western end you will see a vacant lot, with its high board fence covered with painted signs, then a tall mass of apartment houses; then a stretch of ordinary New York dwellings of the old commonplace brownstone sort; then a stable, and a wooden liquor saloon at the corner. Across

the next avenue there rises far aloof the compact bulk of a series of apartment houses, which in color and design are the pleasantest in the city, and are so far worthy of their site. Beyond them to the eastward the buildings decline and fall, till they sink into another two-story drinking-shop on the corner of another avenue, where you will see the terminus of one of the elevated roads. Beyond this avenue is the fence of a large vacant lot, covered, as usual, with theatrical posters, and then there surges skyward another series of apartment houses. The highest of these is nearly fifty feet higher than its nearest neighbors, which sink again, till you suddenly drop from their nondescript monotony to the gothic façade of a house of a wholly different color, in its pale sandstone, from the red of their brick fronts.

A vacant lot yawns here again, with a flare of theatrical posters on its fence, and beyond this, on the corner, is a huge hotel, the most agreeable of the three that tower above the fine square at the gate of the Park. With our silly American weakness for something foreign, this square is called the Plaza; I believe it is not at all like a Spanish plaza, but the name is its least offense. An irregular space in the centre is planted with trees, in whose shade the broken-kneed

hacks of the public carriages droop their unhappy heads, without the spirit to bite the flies that trouble their dreams; and below this you get a glimpse of the conventional cross-street terminating the Plaza. At the eastern corner of the avenue is a costly new apartment house of a modified gothic style, and then you come to the second of the great hotels which give the Plaza such character as it has. It is of a light-colored stone, and it towers far above the first, which is of brick. It is thirteen stories high, and it stops abruptly in a flat roof. On the next corner north is another hotel, which rises six or seven stories higher yet, and terminates in a sort of mansard, topping a romanesque cliff of yellow brick and red sandstone. I seek a term for the architectural order, but it may not be the right one. There is no term for the disorder of what succeeds. From the summit of this enormous acclivity there is a precipitous fall of twelve stories to the roof of the next edifice, which is a grocery; and then to the florist's and photographer's next is another descent of three stories; on the corner is a drinking-saloon, one story in height, with a brick front and a wooden side. I will not ask you to go farther with me; the avenue continues northward and southward in a delirium of lines and colors, a savage anarchy of

shapes, which I should think the general experience of the Fair City at Chicago would now render perceptible even to the dullest sense.

VI.

There are other points on Fifth Avenue nearly as bad as this, but not quite, and there are long stretches of it, which, if dull, have at least a handsome uniformity. I have said already that it is still, upon the whole, the best of the avenues, in the sense of being the abode of the best—that is the richest—people; we Americans habitually use best in this sense. Madison Avenue stretches northwest farther than the eye can reach, an interminable perspective of brownstone dwellings, as yet little invaded by business. Lexington Avenue is of the same character, but of a humbler sort. On Second Avenue, down town, there are large old mansions of the time when Fifth Avenue was still the home of the parvenus; and at different points on such other avenues as are spared by the elevated roads there are blocks of decent and comfortable dwellings; but for the most part they are wholly given up to shops. Of course, these reiterate with the insane wastefulness of our system the same business, the same enterprise, a thousand times.

One hears a good deal about the vast emporiums which are gathering the retail trade into themselves, and devastating the minor commerce, but there are perhaps a score of these at most, in New York; and on the shabbier avenues and cross-streets there are at least a hundred miles of little shops, where an immense population of little dealers levy tribute on the public through the profit they live by. Until you actually see this, you can hardly conceive of such a multitude of people taken away from productive labor and solely devoted to marketing the things made by people who are overworked in making them.

Yet I prefer the smaller shops, where I can enter into some human relation with the merchant, if it is only for the moment. I have already tried to give some notion of the multitude of these; and I must say now that they add much in their infinite number and variety to such effect of gayety as the city has. They are especially attractive at night, when their brilliant lamps, with the shadows they cast, unite to an effect of gayety which the day will not allow.

The great stores contribute nothing to this, for they all close at six o'clock in the evening. On the other hand, they do not mar such poor beauty as the place has with the superfluity of signs that the minor traffic

renders itself so offensive with. One sign, rather simple and unostentatious, suffices for a large store; a little store will want half a dozen, and will have them painted and hung all over its façade, and stood about in front of it as obtrusively as the police will permit. The effect is bizarre and grotesque beyond expression. If one thing in the business streets makes New York more hideous than another it is the signs, with their discordant colors, their infinite variety of tasteless shapes. If by chance there is any architectural beauty in a business edifice, it is spoiled, insulted, outraged by these huckstering appeals; while the prevailing unsightliness is emphasized and heightened by them. A vast, hulking, bare brick wall, rising six or seven stories above the neighboring buildings, one would think bad enough in all conscience: how, then, shall I give any notion of the horror it becomes when its unlovely space is blocked out in a ground of white with a sign painted on it in black letters ten feet high?

The signs that deface the chief of our cities seem trying to shout and shriek each other down, wherever one turns; they deface the fronts and sides and tops of the edifices; in all the approaches to the metropolis they stretch on long extents of fencing in the vacant suburban lands, and cover the roofs and sides of the

barns. The darkness does not shield you from them, and by night the very sky is starred with the electric bulbs that spell out, on the roofs of the lofty buildings the frantic announcement of this or that business enterprise.

The strangest part of all this is, no one finds it offensive, or at least no one says that it is offensive. It is, indeed, a necessary phase of the economic warfare in which our people live, for the most as unconsciously as people lived in feudal cities, while the nobles fought out their private quarrels in the midst of them. No one dares relax his vigilance or his activity in the commercial strife, and in the absence of any public opinion, or any public sentiment concerning them, it seems as if the signs might eventually hide the city. That would not be so bad if something could then be done to hide the signs.

VIII.

Nothing seems so characteristic of this city, after its architectural shapelessness, as the eating and drinking constantly going on in the restaurants and hotels, of every quality, and the innumerable saloons. There may not be really more of these in New York, in proportion to the population, than in other great cities,

but apparently there are more; for in this, as in all her other characteristics, New York is very open; her virtues and her vices, her luxury and her misery, are in plain sight; and a famishing man must suffer peculiarly here from the spectacle of people everywhere at sumptuous tables. Many of the finest hotels, if not most of them, have their dining-rooms on the level of the street, and the windows, whether curtained or uncurtained, reveal the continual riot within. I confess that the effect upon some hungry passer is always present to my imagination; but the New-Yorkers are so used to the perpetual encounter of famine and of surfeit that they do not seem to mind it.

There is scarcely a block on any of the poorer avenues which has not its liquor store, and generally there are two; wherever a street crosses them there is a saloon on at least one of the corners; sometimes on two, sometimes on three, sometimes even on all four. I had the curiosity to count the saloons on Sixth Avenue, between the Park, and the point down town where the avenue properly ends. In a stretch of some two miles I counted ninety of them, besides the eating houses where you can buy drink with your meat; and this avenue is probably far less infested with the traffic than some others.

You may therefore safely suppose that out of the hundred miles of shops, there are ten, or fifteen, or twenty miles of saloons. They have the best places on the avenues, and on the whole they make the handsomest show. They all have a cheerful and inviting look, and if you step within, you find them cosy, quiet, and, for New York, clean. There are commonly tables set about in them, where their frequenters can take their beer or whiskey at their ease, and eat the free lunch which is often given in them; in a rear room you see a billiard-table. In fact, they form the poor man's club-houses, and if he might resort to them with his family, and be in the control of the State as to the amount he should spend and drink there, I could not think them without their rightful place in an economy which saps the vital forces of the laborer with overwork, or keeps him in a fever of hope or a fever of despair as to the chances of getting or not getting work when he has lost it. If you suggested this to the average American, however, he would be horror-struck. He would tell you that what you proposed was little better than anarchy; that in a free country you must always leave private persons free to debauch men's souls and bodies with drink, and make money out of their ruin; that anything else was contrary to

human nature, and an invasion of the sacred rights of the individual. Here in New York, this valuable principle is so scrupulously respected that the saloon controls the municipality, and the New-Yorkers think this is much better than for the municipality to control the saloon. It is from the saloon that their political bosses rise to power; it is in the saloon that all the election frauds are planned and fostered; and it would be infinitely comic, if it were not so pathetic, to read the solemn homilies on these abuses in the journals which hold by the good old American doctrine of private trade in drink as one of the bulwarks of the constitution.

VIII.

Without it, there would be far less poverty than there is, but poverty is a good old American institution, too; there would inevitably be less inequality, but inequality is as dear to the American heart as liberty itself. In New York the inequality has that effect upon the architecture which I have tried to give some notion of; but in fact it deforms life at every turn, and in nothing more than in the dress of the people, high and low. New York is, on the whole, without doubt, the best-dressed community in America, or at least there is a certain number of people here, more expen-

sively and scrupulously attired than you will find anywhere else in the country. The rich copy the fashions set for them in Paris or in London, and then the less rich, and the still less rich, down to the poor, follow them as they can, until you arrive at the very poorest, who wear the cast-off and tattered fashions of former years, and masquerade in a burlesque of the fortunate that never fails to shock and grieve me. They must all somehow be clothed; the climate and the custom require it; but sometimes I think their nakedness would be less offensive; and when I meet a wretched man, with his coat out at the elbows, or split up the back, in broken shoes, battered hat, and frayed trousers, or some old woman or young girl in a worn-out, second-hand gown and bonnet, tattered and threadbare and foul, I think that if I were a believer in it, I would uncover my head to them, and ask their forgiveness for the system that condemns some one always to such humiliation as theirs.

We say such people are not humiliated, that they do not mind it, that they are used to it; but if we ever look these people in the eye, and see the shrinking, averted glance of their shame and tortured pride, we must know that what we say is a cruel lie. At any rate, the presence of these outcasts must spoil the

beauty of any dress near them, and there is always so much more penury than affluence that the sight of the crowd in the New York streets must give more pain than pleasure. The other day on Fifth Avenue it did not console me to meet a young and lovely girl, exquisitely dressed in the last effect of Paris, after I had just parted from a young fellow who had begged me to give him a little money to get something to eat, for he had been looking for work a week and had got nothing. I suppose I ought to have doubted his word, he was so decently clad, but I had a present vision of him in rags, and I gave to the frowzy tramp he must soon become.

Of course, this social contrast was extreme, like some of those architectural contrasts I have been noting, but it was by no means exceptional, as those were not. In fact, I do not know but I may say that it was characteristic of the place, though you might say that the prevalent American slovenliness was also characteristic of the New York street crowds; I mean the slovenliness of the men—the women, of whatever order they are, are always as much dandies as they can be. But most American men are too busy to look much after their dress, and when they are very well to do they care very little for it. You see few men dressed

in New York with the distinction of the better class of Londoners, and when you do meet them, they have the air of playing a part, as in fact they are: they are playing the part of men of leisure in a nation of men whose reality is constant work, whether they work for bread or whether they work for money, and who, when they are at work, outdo the world, but sink, when they are at leisure, into something third rate and fourth rate. The commonness of effect in the street crowds is not absent from Fifth Avenue or from Madison Avenue any more than it is from First Avenue or Tenth Avenue; and the tide of wealth and fashion, that rolls up and down the better avenues in the splendid carriages, makes the shabbiness of the foot-passenger, when he is shabby, as he often is, the more apparent. On the far east side, and on the far west side, the horse-cars, which form the only means of transit, have got the dirt and grime of the streets and the dwellings on them and in them, and there is one tone of foulness in the passengers and the vehicles. I do not wish to speak other than tenderly of the poor, but it is useless to pretend that they are other than offensive in aspect, and I have to take my sympathy in both hands when I try to bestow it upon them. Neither they nor the quarter they live in has any palliating quaintness; and

the soul, starved of beauty, will seek in vain to feed itself with the husks of picturesqueness in their aspect.

IX.

As I have said before, the shabby avenues have a picturesqueness of their own, but it is a repulsive picturesqueness, as I have already suggested, except at a distance. There are some differences of level, on the avenues near the rivers, that give them an advantage of the more central avenues, and there is now and then a break of their line by the water, which is always good. I have noticed this particularly on the eastern side of the city, which is also the older part, and which has been less subject to the changes perpetually going on elsewhere, so that First Avenue has really a finer sky-line, in many parts, than most parts of Fifth Avenue. There are certain bits, as the artists say, in the old quarters of the town once forming Greenwich village, which, when I think of them, make me almost wish to take back what I have said of the absence even of quaintness in New York. If I recall the aspect of Mulberry Bend and Elizabeth street, on a mild afternoon, when their Italian denizens are all either on the pavement or have their heads poked out of the windows, I am still more in doubt of my own words.

But I am sure, at least, that there is no kindliness in the quaintness, such as you are said to find in European cities. It has undergone the same sort of malign change here that has transformed the Italians from the friendly folk they are at home to the surly race they mostly show themselves here: shrewd for their advancement in the material things, which seem the only good things to the Americanized aliens of all races, and fierce for their full share of the political pottage. The Italians have a whole region of the city to themselves, and they might feel at home in it if the filthiness of their native environment could repatriate them.

As you pass through these streets, there is much to appeal to your pity in the squalid aspect of the people and the place, but nothing to take your fancy; and perhaps this is best, for I think that there is nothing more infernal than the juggle that transmutes for the tenderest-hearted people the misery of their fellows into something comic or poetic. Only very rarely have I got any relief from the sheer distress which the prevalent poverty gives; and perhaps the reader will not be able to understand how I could find this in the sight of some chickens going to roost on a row of carts drawn up by the street-side, near a little hovel where

some old people lived in a temporary respite from the building about them; or from a cottage in outlying suburban fields, with a tar-roofed shanty for a stable, and an old horse cropping the pasturage of the enclosure, with a brood of turkeys at his heels.

But in New York you come to be glad of anything that will suggest a sweeter and a gentler life than that which you mostly see. The life of the poor here seemed to me symbolized in a waste and ruined field that I came upon the other day in one of the westward avenues, which had once been the grounds about a pleasant home. Till I saw this I did not think any piece of our mother earth could have been made to look so brutal and desolate amidst the habitations of men. But every spear of grass had been torn from it; the hardened and barren soil was furrowed like a haggard face, and it was all strewn with clubs and stones, as if it had been a savage battleground. A few trees stood aloof from the borders next the streets, where some courses of an ancient stone wall rose in places above the pavement. I found the sight of it actually depraving; it made me feel ruffianly, and I mused upon it in helpless wonder as to the influence its ugliness must have had amidst the structural ugliness all about it, if some wretch had turned to it in hopes of respite.

But probably none ever does. Probably the people on the shabby streets and avenues are no more sensible of their hideousness than the people in the finer streets and avenues are aware of their dulness or their frantic disproportion. I have never heard a New-Yorker speak of these things, and I have no doubt that if my words could come to the eyes of the average New-Yorker he would be honestly surprised that any one should find his city so ugly as it is. As for that first lesson of civilization which my words implicate, a civic control of the private architecture of the place, he would shrink from it with about as much horror as from civic control of the liquor trade. If he did not he would still be unable to understand how the individual liberty that suffers a man to build offensively to his neighbor or to the public at large is not liberty, but is a barbarous tyranny, which puts an end instantly to beauty, and extinguishes the common and the personal rights of every one who lives near the offender or passes by his edifice. We Americans are yet so far lost in the dark ages as to suppose that there is freedom where the caprice of one citizen can interfere with the comfort or pleasure of the rest.

THE END.

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